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KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDES, AND THEIR ASSOCIATION WITH THE PRACTICE RELATED TO CERVICAL CANCER SCREENING AMONG FEMALE TEACHERS OVER 30 YEARS OF AGE IN KALUTARA EDUCATIONAL ZONE

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Background: Cervical cancer is the fifth leading cancer among females in Sri Lanka. Despite its importance, cervical cancer screening rates are low. Teachers' knowledge and attitudes on screening can influence community awareness. Thus, this study was conducted with the aim of assessing the knowledge, attitudes, and their association with the practice related to cervical cancer screening among female teachers over 30 years of age in Kalutara educational zone.

Methods: A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted among 375 female teachers over 30 years of age, selected through multi-stage stratified probability proportionate consecutive sampling, in schools of two randomly selected educational divisions in Kalutara Educational Zone. Those diagnosed with cervical cancer and who had undergone total hysterectomy were excluded. Data were collected using a self-administered questionnaire. Scoring systems developed by experts were used for participant categorization based on their knowledge and attitudes. Factors associated with practice were assessed using Chi-square test at $p < 0.05$ significance level.

Results: Response rate was 100%. Majority of the participants (73.6%) had poor knowledge on cervical cancer screening while, 62.9% of teachers had 'positive' attitudes. Of the participants, only 48.3% had undergone cervical cancer screening. There was a statistically significant association between the level of practice and attitude ($X^2 = 5.631$; $df = 1$; $p = 0.018$). However, their knowledge and practice failed to show any relationship ($X^2 = 0.081$; $df = 1$; $p = 0.776$).

Conclusion: Although teachers over 30 years of age in Kalutara educational zone showed positive attitudes towards cervical cancer screening, their knowledge and practice were low. Their practice was significantly associated with attitude. Focused educational and behavioural change programmes at schools are recommended.

Key words: Knowledge, Attitude, Practice, Cervical cancer screening, Teachers