

European commission initiative on cervical cancer (EC-CvC)

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Introduction:

The European Commission (EC) has supported the development of best practice guidelines and quality assurance benchmarks for cervical screening since 1993. These guidelines have contributed to improving coverage and quality of screening in Europe. However, guidelines need to be updated to address new screening methods, socio-demographic changes and growing inequalities in access to screening. In addition, a novel integrated and patient-centered quality assurance (QA) scheme will be included to ensure better care in key quality domains and covering primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention with a focus on their connection.

Methods:

The EC Initiative on Cervical Cancer (EC-CvC) follows a precise methodological framework for the integrated development of the European clinical practice guidelines and the cervical cancer QA scheme which is guided by Guidelines International Network standards.

A multidisciplinary team of experts will evaluate systematic reviews to establish a care pathway, map priority healthcare questions and identify quality aspects using visual maps and evidence tables. Healthcare questions will be rated, ranked and prioritised. Then each priority question will be investigated by systematic review, evaluated by a sub-group and the working group who will try to reach a guideline recommendation that is clear and based on scientific evidence of benefits; harms; patient preferences, equity and costs. The QA scheme will be developed in parallel with the incorporation of quality indicators, performance measures, and performance indicators integrated into guideline development.

Results:

The key outcomes of the EC-CvC are the development of the European clinical practice guidelines for cervical cancer prevention (from vaccination, to screening and treatment of pre-cancerous lesions), and a corresponding European QA scheme covering the entire care pathway including primary to tertiary prevention.

Conclusion:

Our goal is to help European countries achieve the Beating Cancer Plan and WHO targets while addressing existing inequalities in cancer distribution and evaluating the new methods for screening that are available. The EC-CvC aims to reduce incidence and morbidity from cervical cancer in Europe by providing evidence-based guidelines and quality standards for screening.

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