

Incidence rates of cervical cancer linked to deprivation

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The rate of cervical cancer varies among different geographical areas in Southeast England according to a new study published today in the open access journal *BMC Public Health*. The study shows that the occurrence of cervical cancer is increased in more deprived areas.

Dr Laura Currin and her colleagues at the Thames Cancer Registry of King's College London analyzed data on 2,231 cases of cervical cancer diagnosed between 2001 and 2005 in London, Kent, Surrey and Sussex. "Our goal was to examine cervical cancer occurrences in different areas, to investigate a potential link of cervical cancer to smoking prevalence, teen conception rates and cancer screening and establish if social deprivation remains a factor influencing disease burden. Understanding the factors contributing to an increased incidence will allow future intervention programmes to more effectively target those who carry an increased risk for the disease", Dr Currin says.

The research showed that the incidence rate of cervical cancer varied among the geographical areas of Southeast England - with some areas having rates that were three times higher than neighbouring areas. The highest rates occurred within London. Higher rates of the disease were found in areas characterised by high deprivation, smoking prevalence, and teenage conception rates. This work suggests that to minimise inequality in cervical cancer, public health interventions must target deprived areas. Within those areas there is likely to be further benefit in targeting women identified to have elevated risk.

Dr Currin states "The areas of high and low incidence are geographically close, and rates varied dramatically within a region. Knowledge of local hot spots, along with an awareness that some groups of patients are more likely to develop this disease, may help health professionals improve prevention efforts to reduce the excess morbidity and mortality of cervical cancer."

More information: Inequalities in the incidence of cervical cancer in South East England 2001-2005: an investigation of population risk factors, Laura G Currin, Ruth H Jack, Karen M Linklater, Vivian Mak, Henrik Moller and Elizabeth A Davies, *BMC Public Health* (in press), www.biomedcentral.com/bmcpublichealth/

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