

"Jade effect" helps save lives as cervical cancer rates rise

August 2 2012

(Medical Xpress) -- The rate of new cervical cancers diagnosed in the UK increased by 15 per cent in a year, according to figures from Cancer Research UK today.

Experts say that this dramatic rise could be driven by more [women](#) attending [cervical screening](#) or visiting their doctor following the [diagnosis](#) of Jade Goody in August 2008.

Cervical [cancer rates](#) for women of all ages have remained broadly stable in the UK since 2000.

But latest figures show that there were around 3,400 new cases of cervical cancer in the UK in 2009 compared with nearly 3,000 a year earlier – equal to an increase in rates of almost 15 per cent. And this suggests fewer women will die from the disease thanks to the ‘Jade effect’ as the earlier cervical cancer is diagnosed, the better chance a woman has of receiving life-saving treatment.

The number of cervical cancer cases rose by more than 20 per cent among women aged 25-29 and also those aged 30-34.*

Experts believe that new awareness raised by Jade’s illness may have encouraged more women to be screened leading to this significant rise in cervical cancer cases.

Professor Peter Sasieni, Cancer Research UK’s cervical cancer expert

from Queen Mary, University of London, said: “We closely monitor cervical cancer rates and noticed that rates in young women rose sharply in 2009.

“We believe that the timing of these diagnoses means that the rise in cervical cancer rates can be attributed to the increased cervical screening activity resulting from the media coverage of Jade Goody’s cancer.”

Mum-of-three Hayley Sneath, 30, from Basildon, was diagnosed with cervical cancer in February 2009 after being prompted to go to see her doctor following the publicity around Jade's experience.

“I kept putting off having my [smear test](#) but when I heard about Jade Goody, I finally went.

“When I got the letter telling me I had cancer, I had to face my worst-ever fear. I thought I would die and my children would have to grow up without me. My operation took place on the day of Jade’s funeral and all I could think of was that I would be joining her very soon.

“But, thankfully, because I went for my smear test, my cancer was picked up early and I was able to have it treated successfully.

“I feel very lucky to have survived. Cervical screening involves just a simple routine test but it’s so easy to put off. And all too often cancer is detected further down the line when it’s harder to treat.

“I’ll always be grateful to Jade for reminding everyone to go and have their tests.”

Professor Sasieni added: “Rather than being a bad news story, we believe that the increased numbers diagnosed in 2009 will have meant that fewer women will have developed advanced cervical cancer and many women

owe their life or at least their ability to have children to Jade Goody.

“In other countries, cervical cancer affects one woman in 25. If Jade Goody is to have a lasting legacy we must increase our efforts to maintain a high level of public awareness of the disease and the benefits of screening to ensure that as many lives as possible can be saved through HPV vaccination and cervical screening.”

[Cervical cancer](#) is the 11th most common cancer among women in the UK, responsible for around two per cent of all new cases of cancer in females.

Sara Hiom, director of information at Cancer Research UK, said:
“Cervical screening can detect early changes in the cervix that could lead to cancer if left alone.

“It’s estimated that the national screening programme saves around 5000 lives each year in the UK. And since the introduction of cervical screening (smear tests) in the 1980s, rates of the disease have almost halved. So it’s really important that women take-up the opportunity to go for their smear test when invited.”

Provided by Cancer Research UK

Citation: "Jade effect" helps save lives as cervical cancer rates rise (2012, August 2) retrieved 26 June 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2012-08-jade-effect-cervical-cancer.html>

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