

Cost-effective, low-tech weapons in the fight against cervical cancer

November 26 2012, by Pristine Ong



Associate Professor Lyndal Trevena is tackling cervical cancer in India through mobile technology and low-tech screening.

Vinegar, liquid nitrogen and mobile phones are among the weapons being used by medical researchers in the fight against cervical cancer in India.

Cervical cancer is one of the most preventable forms of cancer, but limited medical services in rural regions of India and the [social stigma](#) attached to cancer - which prevents women seeking help - contribute to high [mortality rates](#). Of the 34,000 Indian women who died from cervical cancer in 2010, most were in their late thirties and early forties and most were in rural areas.

With support from AusAID, Associate Professor Lyndal Trevena from Sydney's School of Public Health has launched a program offering simple but effective low-tech screening, and providing instant information about cervical cancer for [mobile phone users](#).

She has collaborated with the Christian Medical College in Vellore, Weill Cornell Medical College in the USA and Cancer Council Australia to implement a screening program which paints the cervix with vinegar and freezes any abnormalities with [liquid nitrogen](#). This simple technique reduces the [lifetime risk](#) of cervical cancer by 25 to 40 per cent.

She also hopes to improve access to information through an interactive mobile phone program being piloted in partnership with IBM Research in rural towns. The program links with the Indian government's plans to provide free mobile phones to the poorest Indian families. Illiterate women will be able to phone in to a VoiceSite and have their questions answered in their own language.

Professor Trevena, who has worked as a medical practitioner for 25 years, says: "My job is to bridge the gap between research and clinical practice to make sure it makes a difference in people's lives."

Provided by University of Sydney

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