

# Study suggests STD clinics could reduce obstacles to much needed cervical cancer screenings

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A new study found that STD clinics could provide important access to cervical cancer screenings for women who traditionally have trouble receiving these screenings because of lack of insurance or other obstacles.

Cervical cancer can be painful and deadly but can be effectively treated if caught soon enough. Yet in the U.S., reaching women who are underscreened for this cancer remains a public health challenge because insurance is the primary indicator for screening.

"Women who are uninsured, as well as women of color, are at highest risk for being underscreened for cervical cancer. The primary [medical system](#) misses these women completely because of their access [challenges](#)," said Beth Meyerson, co-director of the Rural Center for AIDS/STD Prevention and lead [researcher](#) in the study, "Can STD Clinics Ride the Cervical Cancer Screening Bike? Experiences from an urban STD Clinic," presented at the STI & AIDS World Congress in Vienna this week.

"We have all the tools to address cervical cancer: a safe and effective vaccine, accurate diagnostic tools and treatment options if cervical disease is identified soon enough," Meyerson said. "Yet access is not equal in this country, and we need to find ways to expand our health systems for greater access. This study was about finding a new point of

access for women who need it most."

Researchers recruited women from urban STD clinics to examine their willingness to receive cervical cancer screenings. The vast majority of women elected to participate in the study, primarily because they lacked a primary health care relationship. Participants expressed gratitude—and sometimes relief—for the opportunity to receive the cancer screening given their lack of insurance.

"This study shows that STD clinics—places where women access care episodically—could be a great place to offer cervical cancer screening," Meyerson said. "If we find ways to increase access to screening by women who need it most, we could increase our chances of eliminating a cancer in this generation.

"Our experience suggests that women at STD clinics are eager to receive [cervical cancer](#) screenings and the results," Meyerson said. "The majority of them are in need of this important health service, as they reported not having a pap smear for at least three years."

Meyerson is also an assistant professor of health policy and management at the IU School of Public Health-Bloomington and on the faculty of the the Center for HPV Research at the IU School of Medicine.

Provided by Indiana University

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