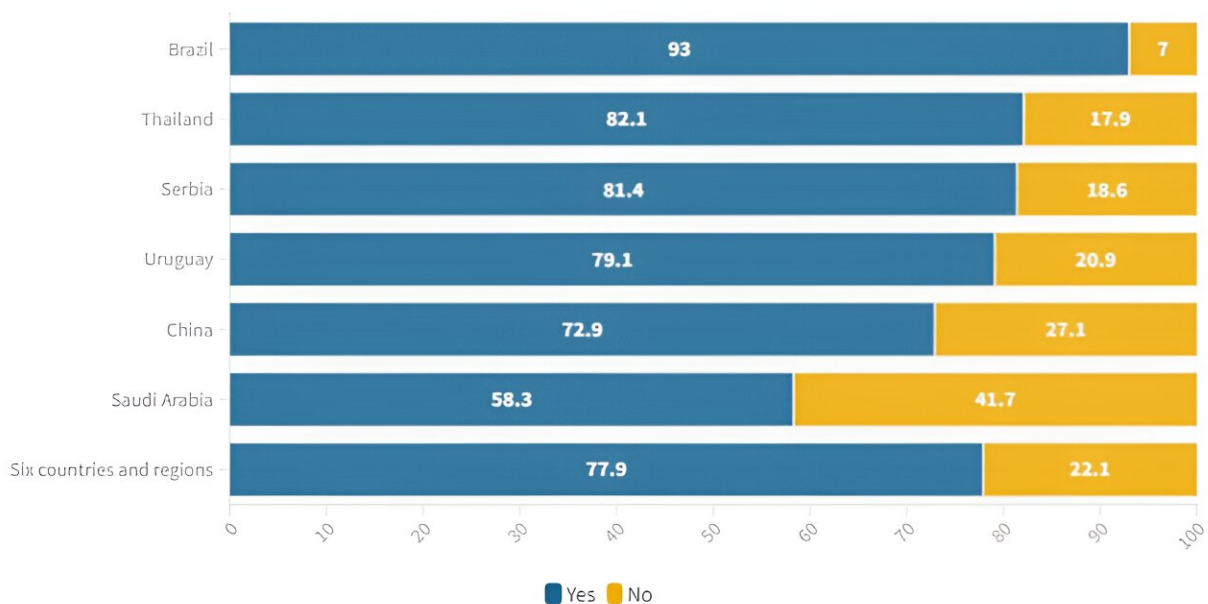


Professor discusses barriers to cervical cancer screening in Uruguay

August 3 2023

Is HPV a sexually transmitted virus?



Credit: BGI Genomics

The recently released BGI Genomics [2023 Global State of Cervical Cancer Awareness Report](#) highlights the level of knowledge, attitudes, and practices related to cervical cancer screening and the human papillomavirus (HPV) on a global scale.

Dr. Deborah Laufer, a gynecologist and Associate Professor at the

Faculty of Medicine in the University of Montevideo, offers her insights on this report's findings and the steps needed to improve [cervical cancer](#) awareness in Uruguay.

Q: 40% of respondents worldwide did not choose HPV as the key cause of cervical cancer. 37% in Uruguay did not mention it either. Why does this awareness gap exist?

Dr. Laufer: Undoubtedly, more education and awareness are needed in our country, mainly because cervical [cancer](#) is the third most common cancer among women. Without understanding HPV causes cervical cancer, increasing access to prevention via vaccination or other [screening](#) methods is very hard.

Furthermore, I think that in our country, there is a more significant lack of information since the HPV vaccine was very controversial, which means fewer people are aware of the vaccine's benefits and, ultimately, cervical cancer prevention.

Q: 21% of Uruguayan women indicate HPV is not a sexually transmitted virus. Are you surprised by this finding?

Dr. Laufer: This data reveals a failure in our health system and sex education programs, not providing enough knowledge to the population that HPV is a sexually transmitted disease. What strikes me the most is the low percentage of awareness, yet I observe that this lack of awareness is reflected worldwide.

Q: Fear of results (40%) and embarrassment of

meeting a male doctor performing a Pap smear (39%) are the top reasons keeping women from undertaking cervical cancer screening. The absence of symptoms is 56% in Uruguay, way higher than the global average (42%).

Dr. Laufer: In Uruguay, [cervical cancer screening](#) is mandatory to obtain occupational health certification. This leads to the majority of the female working-age population taking the test. But they are not aware of cervical cancer prevention.

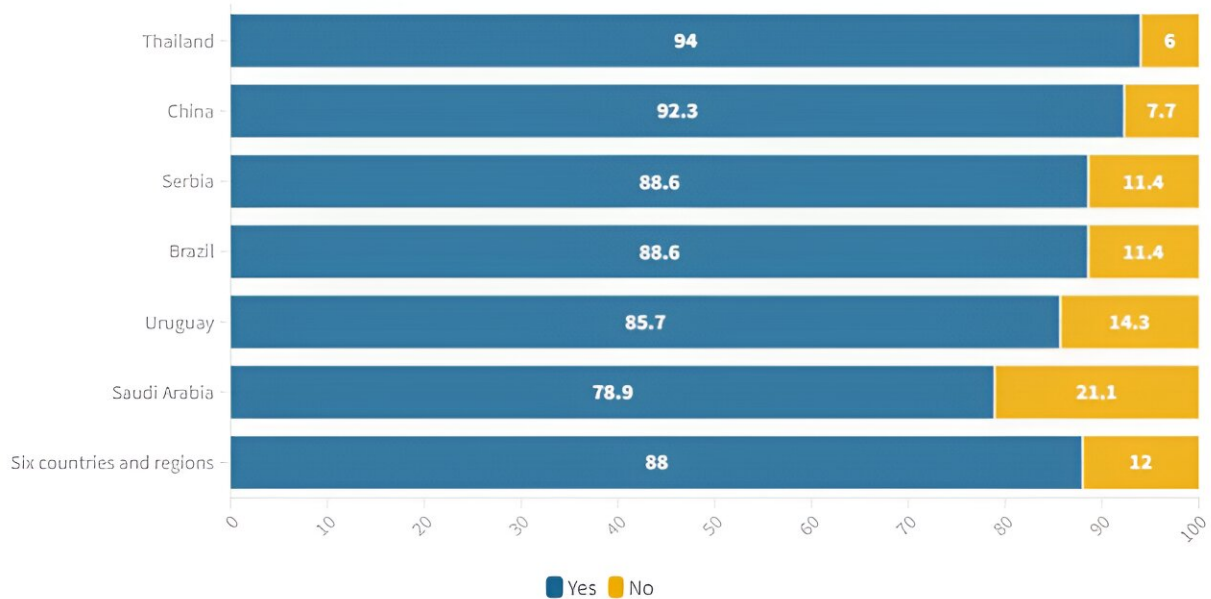
The government health team should focus on educating the population about the importance of early prevention and explain that you don't have to wait for symptoms before getting a check-up done.

Q: 27% of Uruguay women never had a cervical cancer screening. What are the reasons for this gap in your country?

Dr. Laufer: Although [pap smear](#) coverage is required to work, and many Uruguayan women go for gynecological check-ups, much of the population is left out of the formal labor and health system. Investigating, educating these people, and understanding why they don't perform any screening is a priority.

Unfortunately, we also have lost opportunities for women who attend the [health system](#) and still do not have screening tests performed. I estimate that the latter group is less than 27%.

If you are aware that HPV DNA-based testing are more accurate relative to pap smears, are you more likely to choose DNA-based tests?



Credit: BGI Genomics

Q: In Uruguay, 86% of respondents will choose the HPV DNA test over a pap smear upon learning about its higher accuracy. How do you interpret this data?

Dr. Laufer: This response shows that if [women](#) receive clear and proper information about each of the tests and their scope, they are better placed to make more informed decisions.

Provided by BGI Genomics

Citation: Professor discusses barriers to cervical cancer screening in Uruguay (2023, August 3) retrieved 2 May 2024 from

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2023-08-professor-discusses-barriers-cervical-cancer.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.