

## Information for Patients

# Reviewing your cervical screening history

### Cervical Cancer Audit

You have recently been diagnosed with cervical cancer and have either completed treatment or will shortly be due to receive treatment.

This information leaflet is to ensure that you are aware that there will be an audit (review) of your cervical screening history up to the point when your cervical cancer was diagnosed. This audit will include a review of:

- Your medical records,
- All of your previous cervical screening,
- Colposcopy referrals and appointments,
- Any biopsies and treatment reports,
- Follow-up arrangement plans,
- Any letters related to cervical screening.

### Why do you need to audit my records?

This audit will not in any way affect the care that you will receive from your doctors. All the information collected in the audit is confidential and the analysis of the national audit data will be undertaken on an anonymous basis. All cases of cervical cancer will be reviewed.

The National Cervical Screening Programme is estimated to save around 4,500 lives each year in England and to prevent about 3,900 cancers each year in the UK, i.e about 75% of all cervical cancers. However, screening cannot identify every single case of cancer or pre-cancer. This is for a number of reasons which are related to the screening test that is used and the different forms of treatment that are given.

This audit will help us to identify:

- Areas where the screening programme is working well.
- Areas where improvements can be made.

This audit may also help:

- Improve the organisation of the screening programme.
- Provide a better understanding of the development of cancers and how they are diagnosed.

The results of your audit will be available in a few months' time. Please let us know if you would like to receive the results of the audit of your screening history when it is available. If you wish to receive the audit findings, you will be offered an appointment with a consultant to discuss the audit results and ask any questions you may have.

If there is anything that you do not understand about this audit or if you would simply like to discuss it in more detail, please let us know and we can arrange an appointment for this. You may also wish to discuss this with your close family or friends, GP or nurse specialist. You can contact the nurse colposcopists on (0161) 276 5485, Monday – Friday, 8.00 am – 5.00 pm).

## Frequently Asked Questions

### What does the review involve?

We review all records connected to the letters inviting you to come for screening, cervical screening tests, result letters and any previous medical investigations related to cervical screening. A group of professionals then look again at your previous tests, your medical notes related to cervical screening, and also examine whether your screening history meets national guidance.

### What might the review show?

In most cases, the audit will show that the correct procedures have been followed and that you received appropriate care. Sometimes, the review may find that one or more steps in the process have not worked as well as they should and may highlight where we could make improvements.

### Will I be able to have access to the results of my screening audit?

If you want to know the results of the review contact the colposcopy department. Your doctor will let you know when the outcome is available. They can then arrange to discuss the results with you.

### What if I don't want to know the results of the review?

It is completely up to you to decide whether or not you want to know the results of the review. It will not make any difference to your care.

## **What if I don't want to know the results of the review now but change my mind later?**

We understand this is a difficult time and you may not want to receive the results of the review now. If you decide that you do want to know the results in the future, please contact the colposcopy department secretary on (0161) 701 6922, Monday – Friday, 8.30 am – 3.00 pm) who will arrange an appointment where you can discuss the results.

## **Can my family ask for the results if I don't want to know?**

Unless you give permission, we cannot give your relatives access to any details of your medical records.

## **Could my cancer have been found earlier?**

In many cases the cancer will have been detected at the earliest possible stage. Although cervical screening prevents a high percentage of cervical cancers (about 75%), it cannot prevent them all. The review process aims to highlight any possible areas of weakness so we can make improvements for everyone. Some examples are given below.

Screening cannot always identify abnormal cells on a cervical-sample slide because:

- Sometimes the cells do not look much different from normal cells.
- There may be very few abnormal cells on the slide.
- The person reading the slide may miss the abnormality (this happens occasionally, no matter how experienced the reader is).

Colposcopy (a visual examination of the cervix) cannot always identify abnormal areas of the cervix because:

- The abnormal area might not be visible during the examination.
- The abnormal area might not be taken as a sample in a biopsy.
- The abnormal cells might be hidden higher up inside the cervix.
- Some types of abnormality are simply not easy to identify at a Colposcopy.

## **What happens to the information collected for my review?**

We collect screening information as part of an ongoing process. Your information (without your name) goes towards improving the systems of the programme, and to help discover more about how cancers develop and how they are diagnosed and treated. This is done whether or not you want to know the results of the review.

## **Why should women bother to go for cervical screening if abnormalities can be missed?**


Cervical screening reduces the risk of developing cervical cancer. The cervical screening programme is estimated to save 4,500 lives a year nationally and regular screening is the best way to detect early changes to the cervix.


## Your notes or questions

(Please write down any questions you have and bring them with you to your next appointment)

## More Information

If you have any more questions about your referral or treatment.

 Nurse Colposcopists (0161) 276 5485, Monday – Friday, 8.00 am – 5.00 pm)  
Colposcopy secretary (0161) 701 6922, Monday – Friday, 8.30 am – 3.00 pm)

 Colposcopy Department, Saint Mary's Hospital, Oxford Road, Manchester, M13 9WL

 <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/cervical-screening>