

PE2088/B: Help eliminate cervical cancer through improved and at home HPV testing

UK National Screening Committee written submission, 8 July 2024

The UK National Screening Committee (UK NSC) is an independent Scientific Advisory Committee that advises Ministers across the UK on all aspects of screening. The Committee reviewed the evidence on the use of human papillomavirus (HPV) self-sampling as a programme modification within the NHS Cervical Screening Programme in February 2019. Self-sampling might lead to an increase in uptake as it may reduce some of the barriers that prevent people from engaging with the screening offer, including availability of appointments, physical disability, and past trauma. The Committee recognised that HPV self-sampling offered a promising test, but that further work was required to ensure its feasibility and value in the current screening programme. Pieces of work are underway:

Self-sampling for non-attenders (those who have not attended at least 6 months after their appointment, or have never attended)

YouScreen is a research programme that investigated the end-to-end pathways for introducing self-sampling for non-attenders in the NHS Cervical Screening Programme. GP practices across North Central and North East London were given the opportunity to take part in the YouScreen study offering HPV self-sampling to non-attenders aged 25-64 and those at least 6 months overdue for cervical screening. The research has finished but is yet to be published.

The UK NSC have commissioned an evidence review to collate and assess the evidence of the acceptability and effectiveness of introducing self-sampling for non-attenders, including findings from YouScreen.

Self-sampling for women who attend for cervical screening

UK NSC, NHS England (NHSE) and the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) have designed an in-service evaluation which will provide evidence on the effectiveness and feasibility of introducing self-sampling to all eligible participants.

To identify appropriate self-sampling devices for the evaluation the UK NSC and NHSE carried out a study to see how accurate self-samples were compared with clinician-taken samples. This study, called HPVvalidate, has been completed.

The study evaluated 5 self-collection tests. These were combinations of 3 different self-sampling kits:

- Copan Diagnostic's FLOQswab
- Rovers Medical Devices' Evalyn brush
- Hologic's Multitest Swab Specimen Collection Kit

and the 2 human papillomavirus (HPV) assays used in the NHS Cervical Screening Programme at present:

- Roche's cobas 6800/8800
- Hologic's APTIMA Panther

The companies have received their results and an academic publication is awaited.

All these projects will inform UK NSC recommendations. Given the timings of the work the committee will first consider self-sampling for non-attenders, then consider its use for all participants once evidence is reviewed from the ISE.

Self-sampling has increased the uptake in the bowel screening programme. It is hoped that this could lead to a similar increase in people being screened for cervical cancer as it will reduce some of the barriers that prevent people from attending.