

Factors Related to Pap smear Practices of Women Attending Health Clinics in Kuching District, 2009

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Introduction	In Malaysia, cervical cancer is the second most common cancer among females after breast cancer. The first Sarawak Cancer Registry (1996-2000) records an age-standardized rate (ASR) of 18.2 per 100,000 women. International and Malaysia guidelines recommend that all women who have ever been sexually active should have a Pap smear and that after the first two annual negative smears; regular screening at least once in 3 years should be carried out. The relative protection against cervical cancer afforded by 3-yearly Pap smears has been estimated to be about 93%, and this falls to 64% if the last negative screen was performed 10 years ago. Understanding why some women have a Pap smear test on a regular basis and other women do not, has been an important public health issue for improving interventions aimed at increasing compliance with Pap smear screening recommendations. This study was conducted to explore and describe the predictors of Pap smear practices among the studied population, by applying two behavioral theories i.e. Health Belief Model and Multidimensional Health Locus of Control.
Methods	Four hundred participants were recruited from three urban government health clinics in Kuching District, namely Klinik Kesihatan Jalan Masjid, Klinik Kesihatan Tanah Puteh, and Klinik Kesihatan Kota Sentosa. Data were collected using guided self-administered questionnaire adapted from Health Belief Model and Multidimensional Health Locus of Control scales. Logistic and ordinal regression analyses were used for data analysis.
Results	The mean age of the participants was 36.4 ± 9.5 years (range = 18-62). Seventy-five per cent of the participants reported having a Pap smear test in their lifetime. Sixty-seven per cent of all participants had had the test within the past five years, but only 42.7% reported having smears regularly i.e., had the test at least twice within the past five years. The participants who had ever had a Pap smear were more likely to be older, married with more than three children, perceived themselves as susceptible to cervical cancer, and perceived fewer barriers to obtain the test. Age, perceived barriers, and Chance Health Locus of Control predicted the Pap smear frequency
Discussion	This study found that low levels of regular Pap smear uptake among the participants and, the psychological barriers is the most important predictor. Health promotion interventions should specifically target younger women with no children or less children, and emphasize the importance of Pap smear, the procedure, and risk factors of cervical cancer.