

LESSON 2

CERVICAL CANCER

- **CERVICAL CANCER HAS BECOME THE LEADING CANCER AMONG WOMEN IN TAIWAN. HUMAN PAPILLOMA VIRUS (HPV) IS THE MAIN VIRUS THAT CAUSES THIS CANCER. WHEN A WOMAN IS INFECTED WITH HPV, SHE WILL USUALLY RECOVER IN SEVEN TO EIGHT MONTHS AFTER RECEIVING TREATMENT. HOWEVER, IF THE INFECTION CONTINUES, IT WILL DEVELOP INTO CERVICAL CANCER.**

Before You Read

Discuss the following questions with your group members.

1. What are some diseases that affect women more than men?
2. Is cancer usually a fatal disease?
3. What risk factors may cause cervical cancer?
4. Do you know what treatments are available for cervical cancer?
5. What are some of the problems and emotions that patients with cervical cancer may experience?

There is a famous slogan, “Six Minutes Save Your Life,” which was created by the Taiwanese government to raise awareness of cervical cancer. Discuss this slogan with your classmates and make a wild guess about the questions below.

1. Women at which age and above should have a cervical smear?

2. How often should women have a cervical smear?

3. Who should be considered the priority for having a cervical smear—a woman who has had only one sexual partner, or a woman who has had more than one sexual partner?

4. Who is more likely to get cervical cancer? A woman who smokes or a woman who doesn't smoke?

Dialog

Read the conversation and infer the meaning of the underlined words without using a dictionary.

D: doctor, **P:** patient

P: Hi, Dr. Smith.

D: Hello, Ms. Patterson. Have a seat!

P: Well...it shouldn't be my menstrual period now, but I have a bloody discharge from er... below.

D: You mean the vagina?

P: Er...yes.

D: When was your last menstrual period ?

P: Mmm...about July the thirteenth.

D: Was the discharge a lot? Did you have to use a maxi pad, tampon, regular pad, or combination?

P: Yes. I've been using a maxi pad since then, as a regular pad is not enough.

D: Have you been keeping a regular regimen? For example, do you stay up late very often?

P: Only once in a while.

D: How often is that?

P: About twice every two or three weeks.

D: Hmm...I suggest that you have a cervical smear.

P: When should I have it?

D: Now. It can be done in a minute or so.

* * *

after the cervical smear

* * *

D: Please fill in this form. The results of your cervical smear will be mailed to you in two weeks. Remember to come back and we'll discuss the results.

P: Okay... (Filling in the form.)

D: Sometimes women will have bloody discharge after sexual intercourse. And sometimes the reasons are simply unknown. During the next two weeks, please don't worry too much, and remember to maintain a healthy lifestyle. Also, avoid foods that contain carcinogens, such as processed meats and deep-fried food.

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* * *

two weeks later

* * *

D: Well...do you visit a gynecologist regularly?

P: No. I don't like to see doctors.

D: The report shows that you have some cervical cancer cells, but don't worry. If you receive treatment at this stage (stage 1), such as electrocoagulation, or cone biopsy, a kind of electrocoagulation, you can recover quickly.

P: Really?

D: However, it is vital that you receive treatment now. If left untreated, the cancer cells will spread into your pelvic tissue, and also into other areas such as the bladder and rectum. But trust me, if you receive treatment at this stage, the recovery rate is very high.

P: Will it be very painful if I receive the electro...

D: Electrocoagulation. No. We will give you anesthesia to numb the pain. Don't worry too much.

P: Okay, then I will definitely take your advice. How much is the fee, by the way?

D: The assistant nurse will explain this to you...

Exercise

Odd word out: Circle the words that do not belong in each group.

1. a. discharge b. ejection c. expulsion d. immerse
2. a. intercourse b. withdrawal c. interaction d. contact
3. a. bloody b. gory c. tainted d. uncontaminated
4. a. vagina b. bladder c. debris d. rectum
5. a. vertical b. monthly c. menstrual d. biannual

Vocabulary

ESP Vocabulary

This vocabulary is commonly used in the field of health and medical care.

vagina	<i>n</i>	the passage from a woman's outer sex organs to the cervix of the uterus
gynecologist	<i>n</i>	a doctor who studies and treats medical conditions and diseases that affect women's reproductive organs
cervical smear	<i>n phr</i>	a pap smear; a medical test in which cells are taken from a woman's cervix to be checked for cancer
pelvic	<i>adj</i>	relating to your pelvis—the large curving bones that support the lower back and that the bones of your legs are connected to
bladder	<i>n</i>	a bag-like part inside your body where urine collects before being passed from the body
rectum	<i>n</i>	the lowest part of the tube through which solid waste leaves your body
electrocoagulation	<i>n</i>	also known as Radio Frequency Diathermy or Short Wave Electrolysis
anesthesia	<i>n</i>	loss of feeling; a medical procedure in which drugs are given to a patient so that they will feel no pain

General Vocabulary

This vocabulary is used for general purposes.

discharge	<i>n</i>	liquid or gas that pours forth from a place, or the process of coming out into water or the air
menstrual	<i>adj</i>	relating to a woman's period
tampon	<i>n</i>	an object that a woman puts inside her vagina to absorb blood during her period
intercourse	<i>n</i>	the act of having sex
bloody	<i>adj</i>	marked with blood or showing a lot of blood
carcinogen	<i>n</i>	a substance that can cause cancer
regimen	<i>n</i>	regular routine related to diet, exercise and overall lifestyle

Reading

Cervical Cancer

This case study is about a middle-aged woman who was diagnosed with cervical cancer. She was quite sexually-active, and she did not receive cervical smear examinations regularly. Furthermore, her grandmother had cervical cancer as well. At first, she did not have any obvious symptoms. Eventually, she experienced vaginal bleeding or bloody **5 discharges** at unexpected times.

One morning, the woman noticed that she was bleeding from her **vagina**. As she often had irregular **menstrual** periods, she ignored this and simply used a **tampon**. The next evening, she noticed that there was relatively little bleeding from what she still believed to be her period, but thought that this might be due to recent work pressure and her **10 attempts** to lose weight. Two weeks later, after she had sexual **intercourse** with a man she had met in a bar, she had another **bloody** discharge, which she thought was strange. However, she ignored it again and thought that it might be the result of passionate and intense sexual intercourse.

Four weeks later, the woman had her regular period, but she bled for fourteen days, so **15 she** finally decided to see her **gynecologist**. The doctor performed a **cervical smear** test and told her to come back in one week. When the patient came back, the doctor told her that she had stage I of cervical cancer and explained that if left untreated, it would spread from the surface of the cervix to the deeper parts, and then into the **pelvic** tissues, causing intense pain. After this, it would continue to spread to her **bladder** and **rectum**.

20 The doctor suggested that she undergo **electrocoagulation treatment**, which uses heat to destroy tissue. The doctor stated that the treatment could be carried out painlessly under local **anesthesia**; he stated that the success rate for complete removal of the cancer cells with electrocoagulation was about ninety-five percent. However the doctor also warned that if the woman were pregnant, she would have to postpone treatment until after she **25 gave** birth. The doctor thus carried out a pregnancy test and verified that she was not pregnant. The doctor encouraged the patient to undergo treatment immediately, and she agreed to accept **electrocoagulation treatment**.

30 After **electrocoagulation treatment**, the patient went to church every week and prayed every night before going to bed. Following the doctor's advice, she also joined a group of other women with cervical cancer. They met twice a week to give one another support and share their progress. The patient also began to eat more carefully and choose foods that did not contain **carcinogens**. Her knowledge on how to eat and live more healthily improved by leaps and bounds.

By combining *electrocoagulation treatments* and a healthy **regimen**, the patient has now
35 recovered.

After You Read

Answer the following questions after you read the article.

1. What were the main symptoms of cervical cancer in this case?
2. What kind of screening test was used to check if the woman had cervical cancer?
3. Why do you think that pregnancy was a concern to the doctor before he performed the treatment?
4. Can you recognize the general stages of cervical cancer from this article?
5. What were the treatments suggested by the doctor? Can you think of any other methods?

Language Focus

Corpus Study

In the previous lesson, we learned some of the common mistakes made by Taiwanese medical students when composing medical reports. In the table below is a list of the twenty-five most common verbs used by native English-speaking medical professionals in their medical reports. Use some of the verbs shown to complete the following admission note. Choose the most appropriate verbs to fill in the blanks.

Verbs used frequently by native English-speaking medical professionals		
1. was	11. did	21. noted
2. were	12. administered	22. reported
3. had	13. admitted	23. have
4. showed	14. increased	24. obtained
5. revealed	15. appeared	25. included
6. performed	16. breathing	
7. been	17. be	
8. are	18. seen	
9. shown	19. begun	
10. developed	20. decreased	

(source: 2010, NCKU English Eagle Project, National Cheng Kung University)

Exercise

Ms. J is a 30-year-old woman. She is not married but has had multiple sexual partners. In the previous three months, some abnormal symptoms were 1. _____. She 2. _____ that her periods became irregular and she had bloody discharge. Due to the symptoms, she 3. _____ to see a gynecologist. At the beginning, the doctor suggested that she have safe sex and choose a stable partner in order to 4. _____ infection. Medicine was 5. _____ and a pap smear test was done. One week later, the results 6. _____ that Ms. J 7. _____ cervical cancer. She was 8. _____ to the hospital for further treatment. A cervical cancer screening test was 9. _____ to confirm the diagnosis. The results 10. _____ that the tumor was smaller than 4 cm and had not spread to organs and tissues outside of the cervix. Stage 1B cervical cancer was thus diagnosed.

Speaking Skills: Narrative Medicine

In the previous lesson, we looked at writing medical narratives, and learned that there are some important differences between these texts and more academic ones.

Work in groups. Use what you have learned to change the following medical record into a piece of medical narration. Then present the case to the class.

Name: Ms. B	Age: 45	Marital state: married
Patient's Background: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Married for 17 years ◆ Three children: 12, 9, and 3 years. ◆ Job: housewife ◆ Husband's job: car engineer ◆ Illness background: Nil ◆ Cervical cancer found a month ago 		
Symptoms: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Light bleeding occurs between regular menstrual periods. ◆ Increasing vaginal discharge with foul smelling, watery and contains mucus ◆ Last pap smear: 5 years ago. 		
Diagnosis: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Pap smear: abnormal ◆ Pelvic exam: cancer has spread to the lower portion of the vagina. ◆ Diagnosis: cervical cancer (Stage 3) 		

Tasks

I Research & Writing

In the reading article, the patient is diagnosed as having early-stage cervical cancer, maybe in stage I, where the cancer is still contained within the cervix area, and therefore there is a very high survival rate. If the patient is undergoing stage III of cervical cancer, the cancer has begun to spread outside the cervix into the surrounding tissues, and the treatments include chemotherapy and radiation. If you have a patient who is undergoing STAGE IV of cervical cancer, what symptoms will she experience? What about the corresponding treatments and the survival rates? Complete the following table and discuss your answer with a partner.

	STAGE IV of cervical cancer
a. Symptoms	
b. Treatments	
c. Survival Rates	

II Research & Presentation

There is a large amount of information about cervical cancer online. In this section, you need to do some research to answer the following questions. Form a group and be prepared to make a 10-15 minute presentation next time.

1. In addition to having multiple sexual partners, like the patient in this case, what are the risk factors that can cause cervical cancer? Go online to find out at least FIVE other causes of cervical cancers and explain them.
2. How can we prevent or lower the risk of cervical cancer?
3. What are the five different stages of cervical cancer? What is the prognosis in terms of survival rates for each stage?
4. What are the possible treatments for cervical cancer?
5. What physical and emotional problems could a cervical-cancer patient have after these treatments?

	PHYSICAL effects	EMOTIONAL effects
AFTER treatment		