

Scaling up Single Visit Approach for Cervical Cancer Screening in Thailand: Successes and Lessons Learned

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Background: Cervical Cancer ranks as second most common cancer among women in Thailand. Benefit of early treatment is well established. Costly and inconvenient conventional screening methods necessitate a more affordable accessible, practical alternative needed. In 2002, the successful implementation study of VIA and Cryotherapy in a single visit approach using trained nurses provided an alternative option.

Methods: Using evidence generated from the study, the partnership of local and national governments and the CECAP team supported the scale up of the SVA across Thailand in the last 14 years. With local funding, capacity was built through 63 training courses resulting to 1432 nurses certified to perform VIA and cryotherapy for precancer lesion. Another 172 clinical trainers were prepared to conduct training and supportive supervision for mentoring and quality assurance. Supply chain and maintenance support were established for vinegar, CO2 and cryotherapy. Documentation and reporting of screening activities were developed. Screening is done at primary health centers in 31 provinces. Referral linkages to provincial and regional hospitals were strengthened.

Results : Across 31 provinces that are using VIA, a total of 749,407, (23 %) of all eligible women were screened, 27,978 (4 %) were VIA positive and 15,396 (55 %) received immediate cryotherapy and the remaining 45 % were referred to the next level of care. The remaining 44 provinces are continuing to rely on cytology for screening.

Conclusion: SVA can be scaled up as a viable option for cervical cancer prevention. Accessing screening and treatment at the community reduces health inequity for women and maximizes preventative effort. The key success factors included political commitment at national and local levels, nurturing champions for change, local financing to sustain scale up, replicative capacity building and quality assurance.

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