Abstract:

Cervical cancer, which many physicians as of 2019 consider to be a success in terms of establishing widely used forms of early preventative and diagnostic technologies, experienced a reduction in incidence rates in women by over fifty percent between 1975 and 2016. Cervical cancer does not often present in women with symptoms until it has entered a later stage of the disease. Because of this fact, in the early twentieth century, physicians were often only able to diagnose cervical cancer when either the woman reported complaints or there was a visual confirmation of lesions on the cervix. The symptoms women often reported included vague abdominal pain, bleeding after sex, and abnormal amounts of vaginal discharge, all of which are non-specific symptoms, making it even harder for women to be diagnosed with cervical cancer.

This thesis answers the following question: How does the history of cervical cancer show that prevention helps reduce rates of cancer-related deaths among women? By studying the history of cervical cancer, people can understand how a cancer that was once one of the top killers of women in the US has declined to become one of the lowest through the establishment of and effective communication of early prevention and diagnostics, both among the general public and within the medical community itself. This thesis is organized based on key episodes which were pertinent to the history of cervical cancer, primarily within the United States and Europe. The episodes are organized in context of the shifts in thought regarding cervical cancer and include topics such as vaccine technologies like the Gardasil and Cervarix vaccines, social awareness movements that educated women on the importance of early detection, and analyses of the early preventative strategies and attempts at treating cervical cancer.

Subject
Cervix uteri--Cancer, Cervical cancer, Cancer, History of Medicine, Medicine, History

Topic
Technologies, Outreach

Publisher
Arizona State University. School of Life Sciences. Center for Biology and Society. Embryo Project Encyclopedia.

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