

Savings Women's Lives: Early Detection and Treatment of Cervical Cancer in India

In India, every seven minutes a woman dies from cervical cancer, resulting in over 75,000 deaths per year and accounts for 20% of all cervical cancer cases worldwide. Without routine screening programs in place, women seek care too late when the cancer has become invasive and is untreatable. Often women fall sick – and far too many succumb to cancer – in the prime of their lives, when they are busy raising children, caring for spouses, and actively contributing to their communities. What's most tragic about this scenario is that all of the tools necessary to prevent these deaths exist today, and yet they are neither being deployed efficiently nor at the scale needed to sustain significant health impact.

Population Services International (PSI) saw an opportunity for action. In 2013, with the support of a private philanthropist engaged through PSI's Maverick Collective, PSI/India launched a pilot program to screen 140,250 women and treat 6,800 women over 3 years using a simple technique called visual inspection with acetic acid, or VIA, in which a swab of diluted acetic acid (vinegar) is placed on the cervix to detect for pre-cancerous lesions (which appear as white, while healthy tissue is pink). If positive, women can be treated during the same visit to remove the affected tissue, and counseled on appropriate follow-up care.

Maverick Collective

Maverick Collective is a new program within PSI that engages philanthropists (members) experience, time, talent and resources to focus on six key areas: reproductive health, non-communicable diseases, water sanitation and hygiene, gender based violence, HIV and AIDS, and maternal and child health. In each area, a Maverick Collective member dives into the core of the issue alongside PSI and partner experts to pilot new innovative approaches that can be scaled through leveraging institutional donor funding. To date, Maverick Collective programs have supported over 300,000 women and leveraged over \$60m in additional program funding.

Program Results to Date

Since March 2013, the program has:

- Reached a total of 326,648 women with specific messages on cervical cancer and screened 118,005 women aged 30-59 years using VIA in 10 districts of UP; treated 3,500 (66% of total 5894 VIA+) women for pre-cancer lesions, and referred 615 (10%) for follow-on care. The program dispatches mobile vans to transport women for care, as needed.
- Served as technical partners to the State of UP on the development of a woman's screening and awareness package for non-communicable diseases (NCDs), including VIA-based screening, blood glucose screening, blood pressure screening, anemia and body mass index in public sector facilities. A total of 35,639 women have been screened for these conditions across 28 districts.
- Established memoranda of understanding (MOU) with the Indian Medical Association and , three medical colleges, and the Federation of Gynecological and Obstetric Societies of India

(FOGSI), leading to greater visibility and support within the Indian medical community.

- Trained 202 health providers across both public and private sectors to reach more women with cervical cancer screening and preventative treatment.

Public Sector Support for Women's Wellness Package for NCDs



Project mobilizers going to sensitize women about screening activities in remote areas.

Initially, this program focused solely on increasing awareness and uptake for cervical cancer screening among clients ages 30-59 years in UP's private sector health system. In 2014, the program caught the attention of the State health authorities who invited PSI/India to serve as technical partners to develop and disseminate a public sector package of services to address the growing burden of cervical cancer, as well as other common NCDs, including diabetes, hypertension, and anemia. The *Sampoorna* clinics, meaning 'complete' or 'comprehensive' in Hindi, were launched in July 2015, and are now screening thousands women across 18 districts of UP. An

additional 10 districts will launch the *Sampoorna* program in early 2017. The public sector program is currently funded through the National Health Mission Uttar Pradesh.

What's Next?

The initial pilot will draw to a close in December 2016, but there is more work to be done. Going forward, the team will:

- Continue to work with local government, civil society, academia, and professional groups to move the cervical cancer prevention agenda forward in India.
- Support global efforts to increase awareness and funding for cervical cancer prevention. PSI actively supports the Cervical Cancer Action's five-year initiative to increase prevention efforts through increased donor awareness and funding.
- Seek cost-effective screen and treat models for increased efficiency and scale in screening and treatment.
- Identify opportunities to link with primary prevention efforts to promote HPV vaccine uptake in India and globally.



Outreach worker speaks to women about cervical cancer prevention.