

NZCOM CONSENSUS STATEMENT

Cervical Screening

This Consensus Statement was ratified at the NZCOM National Committee Meeting 16 May 1996

The New Zealand College of Midwives (Inc) supports the National Cervical Screening Programme and its guidelines for smear taking. Optimally cervical screening (and/or smear taking) is performed preconceptually or at least three months postpartum.

Rationale:

The midwife's scope of practice is one of taking responsibility for the care of a woman immediately prior to and throughout her pregnancy, childbirth and up to six weeks postpartum. Cervical screening and smear taking are not considered routine maternity services. It is however an appropriate and recommended part of the midwife's preconceptual service.

Guidelines

During pregnancy or at times when women have lower oestrogen levels, eg breastfeeding or using progesterone only contraceptives, endocervical cells are frequently not found. This makes assessment of cervical smears more difficult and increases the necessity for repeat smears. Although smear taking in pregnancy is not routinely recommended a smear should be taken if the woman is due to have one according to the National Cervical Screening programme guidelines, or if she has never had a smear or if there have been specific indications for a follow-up smear. In this situation a spatula and a "broom" device must be used to ensure the optimal conditions for obtaining endocervical cells. During pregnancy the use of cervical brushes (cytobrush) is contraindicated.

- If women do require a smear during pregnancy it is recommended that it be taken before 12 weeks gestation if possible.
- If women require a postnatal smear it is recommended that it is taken at least three months postpartum.

A registered midwife is considered a smear taker as this is a midwifery competency. It is recommended that all midwives update their skill level and accuracy on a regular basis.

References

Title: Guidelines for Competence Based Practising Certificate for Registered Midwives

Author: Nursing Council of New Zealand, April 1999

Source: PO Box 9644
Wellington
New Zealand

Title: Recommendations for Cervical Screening 1997

Author: Members of the Working Party on Cervical Screening

Source: New Zealand Medical Journal
17 March, 1998 Pages 94-98

Title: National Cervical Screening Programme, Interim Operational Policy and Quality Standards
Author: National Cervical Screening Programme, October 2000
Source: Private Bag 92 522
Wellesley Street
Auckland

- This document has extensive references surrounding all aspects of cervical screening.

Title: Introduction to Cytology for the Primary Health Professional
Author: Medlab South
Source: Medlab South, Christchurch, Dunedin, Invercargill

Title: Pregnancy and Abnormal Smears
Author: The Cancer Research Campaign 2000
Source: www.cancerhelp.org.uk

Title: Management of low-grade squamous intraepithelial lesions during pregnancy
Author: Astrid G Jain, MD
Source: Dept of O&G, PO Box 32 861, Charlotte, NC 28232-2861 America
www.obgyn.net/jr/review

References Updated November 2001
Guidelines Updated November 2001

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The purpose of New Zealand College of Midwives Consensus Statements is to provide women, midwives and the maternity services with the profession's position on any given situation. The guidelines are designed to educate and support best practice.

All position statements are regularly reviewed and updated in line with evidence-based practice.