

Cervical cancer test better than pap smear

LERATO DIALE
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A NEW test to detect cervical cancer is being hailed as the answer to cervical cancer detection, as it is more accurate than the traditional pap smear test.

The test can be taken in the comfort of your home and is already in use in other countries.

According to experts, the pap smear test developed in the '40s has a 54% sensitivity rate, meaning 46% of cervical cancers are missed.

Head of the molecular pathology laboratory at Lancet Laboratories Dr Chris Maske said: "With the introduction of HPV DNA testing, there is absolutely no need for any woman in this day and age to develop cervical cancer, let alone die of the disease. It has the highest death rate among women in South Africa."

An estimated 10 women die of cervical cancer every day in South Africa, with 99% of cervical cancers caused by human papillomavirus (HPV), which is spread through bodily fluids, mucous membranes and infected genital skin.

Clinical virologist Dr Allison Glass said: "We always relied on the pap smear as a screening test but now large studies have shown that HPV testing is much better for detecting women who are at risk of cervical cancer."

Experts say that while the pap smear has saved millions of lives, it is simply not effective enough. Medical experts now recommend that HPV screening be done before a pap smear, as it is both more sensitive and more accurate.

Allison Martin, the founder of UdoTest (HPV DNA testing) said the test should become the primary screening option for cervical cancer. "It's already happening overseas. Women need to do the more accurate cervical cancer test first," Martin said.

"We are screening and educating women in both rural and urban areas, as well as internationally. I share Dr Maske's sentiment that no woman should develop cervical cancer in this day and age," Martin said.

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