Cervical Cancer and COVID: A collaborative assessment of the effect of the COVID pandemic on the presentation of Cervical cancer in the North of England

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Abstract

Objective: To review the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on the presentation of Cervical cancer. Design/ Setting: Retrospective study involving the Regional Cancer Centres in the M62 Group. Methods: Data was collected for two equal time periods. All cervical cancers were included and FIGO 2018 staging was used for the data collection. P values were calculated using binomial hypothesis test for the difference in staging. Time from symptoms to diagnosis was assessed using a normal distribution test. All other calculations were performed using chi-squared test. Statistical significance was considered if p values were <0.05. Main outcome measures: Histology, stage at diagnosis, date of onset of symptoms, investigation and type of treatment. Results: A total of 406 cases of cervical cancer were reviewed; 233 from May – October 2019 (pre-COVID) and 173 between May – October 2020 (post COVID); representing a significant reduction in new cervical cancer diagnoses of 25% post COVID (p<0.001) There was a 42% increase in the delay from start of symptoms to diagnosis Post COVID. Pre COVID, 27% of patients presented with Stage 3 or 4 disease, whilst during COVID this was 38%; statistically significant (p <0.001). When we evaluated the treatments received between the two time periods, this was also statistically significant (chi-squared, p=0.0005). Conclusions: This study has demonstrated a statistically significant increase in the stage of cervical cancer at diagnosis and a change in treatment for cervical cancer following the onset of COVID-19. The implications of this are discussed.

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