Cervical cancer screening and management of cervical pre-cancers
Counselling cards
Purpose of counselling cards
There are 15 counselling cards that can be used depending on the situation described. The cards are numbered from 1-15. There is a card selection catalogue indicating the card number, topic and category of audience for whom it is meant to be used. The ‘general’ category means it can be used both for small group discussion as well as one-on-one discussion with a woman. The ‘specific’ category card is meant to be used when talking to a woman with relevant situation given in the card. The CERVICAN services’ counselors need to familiarize themselves with the contents and the pictures of individual cards prior to the counseling session. The cards are to be used in the following way:
- Identify the situation from the list of topics given to the card catalogue.
- Select a card appropriate to the situation (e.g. benefits of cervical cancer screening).
- Hold the card in such a way that the picture side of the card faces the woman/counselor and the message side is towards you.
- Start the conversation in your own language while looking into the message points given in the card. Do not read the points.
- Ask questions to make it participatory and find the discussion according to the listed points on the card. Address the woman/counselor if necessary.
- Conclude the discussion by asking her to describe in her own words what she has understood and what she is going to do. E.g. agree to go for screening test on the specified date.

Card catalogue

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Card number</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td>General</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>How to prepare for a screening test</td>
<td>General</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>What is done during a screening test</td>
<td>General</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Negative test results: What to do next</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Positive test results: What to do next</td>
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<td>Positive test results: What is done during further check-up?</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Test result is suspicious of cervical cancer: What to do next</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Things to avoid after cervical biopsy or treatment for cervical pre-cancer</td>
<td>Specific</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Warning signs after cervical biopsy or treatment for cervical pre-cancer</td>
<td>Specific</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Benefits of cervical cancer screening

Talking points

- Cervical cancer is a common cancer amongst women, affecting the “mouth of the womb”. In most cases of cervical cancer, women do not experience any pain. However, they may experience pain during terminal stages, which eventually leads to death.

- Cervical cancer can be prevented if detected early. This process of detecting the disease early is known as screening.

- If you are aged 30 years and above, you should have cervical cancer screening at regular intervals.

- Cervical cancer screening tests are simple, quick and do not cause pain.

- The tests identify cervical pre-cancers that can be easily treated and cured by simple procedures.

- You will be able to go home on the same day and carry on with your day-to-day activities.

- When you are ready for the screening tests, please visit your nearest health facility.
Benefits of cervical cancer screening
How to prepare for a screening test

Talking points

- You should go for the screening test on days when you are not menstruating.
- Do not wash the inside of your birth canal (vagina) for at least one day before going for the test.
- Try to avoid sexual relations for at least one day before the test.
- Do not use any birth control cream or jelly in your birth canal for at least one day before the test.
- If you are pregnant, inform your doctor/nurse about your pregnancy. They may advise you to wait for at least six weeks after childbirth.
How to prepare for a screening test
What is done during a screening test?

Talking points

- In the screening clinic, your health care provider will explain to you about the type of screening test you will have. You will be required to give your consent before the screening test.

- You will first be asked to go to the washroom to pass urine and then lie down on an examination table, on your back with your legs folded at the knees.

- After you are comfortable on the table, a ‘spoon-like’ small instrument known as ‘speculum’ will be introduced inside your birth canal (vagina) to visualize the ‘mouth of the womb’ (cervix).

- You will not feel any pain but may experience a little discomfort when the speculum is introduced inside your vagina.

- Your healthcare provider may do any one of the following screening tests:
  - VIA
  - HPV test
  - PAP smear

- If you are having VIA as the screening test, your cervix will be examined after application of a dilute solution of vinegar (acetic acid). You may experience a little tingling sensation during the test. That goes away after a few minutes. You will be informed of your VIA result immediately after the test.

- If you are having PAP smear or HPV test, a soft brush will be used to collect cells from your cervix. The sample will be sent to the laboratory for examination. You will be informed of the test results in a couple of weeks’ time.

- It takes only a few minutes to do any of the above mentioned screening tests.
What is Done During Screening Test
Negative test result: What to do next

Talking points

- Congratulations! Your screening test result is negative which means you do not have cervical pre-cancer or cancer at present.
- You have a very low chance of getting cervical cancer in the next 5 years.
- You do not need any treatment.
- You should continue to have repeat screening tests once in every 3–5 years because new infections can occur any time and cause abnormal changes in the cervix.
- Keep your records safely and bring them when you come for the repeat test. Your old records will help the test provider to know and compare the previous and current test results.
- You can visit the screening clinic any time you want for further advice or for any other problems like foul smelling discharge, bleeding after sexual contact or bleeding in between your periods.
Positive test result: What to do next

Talking points

- Your screening test result is positive but that does not mean you have cervical cancer.
- It means that you have a few cells in the cervix that are not normal.
- These abnormal cells may simply be the result of infection by the virus (HPV) causing cervical cancer. Very few women with this virus infection will have cervical pre-cancer or cancer.
- In a small number of women, these abnormal cells may produce early changes in the cervix (pre-cancers), that can easily be detected and treated.
- In view of your positive test result, you will either receive appropriate treatment or will be referred for further check up.
- If you are advised treatment, please do not worry. Treatment takes very little time, is not painful and you can go home on the same day.
- Keep your screening/treatment records safely and carry them along with you every time you visit your health care facility for check-ups.
Positive test result: What to do next
Positive test result: What is done during further check-up?

Talking points

- You have been referred for further check-up in view of your positive screening test report.
- During the check-up, your doctor will do a test known as ‘colposcopy’ to find out more about the abnormal changes to your cervix.
- Colposcopy is a procedure where the cervix is closely examined with the help of a special magnifying machine known as ‘coloscope’.
- You will not feel any pain during the procedure.
- It takes around 10–20 minutes to do the test and you will be able to go home on the same day.
- After colposcopy, if your doctor suspects abnormality in your cervix, he/she may:
  - Advise you to have treatment in the same visit; OR
  - Take a small sample of tissue from the abnormal area of your cervix (biopsy) and send it to a laboratory for confirmation of the abnormality.
- The result of your biopsy will be available within 1–2 weeks’ time. You will have to collect the biopsy report and meet your doctor for advice.
Positive test result: What is done during further check-up?
Test result is suspicious of cervical cancer: What to do next

Talking points

- Your screening test result shows an abnormality in your cervix.
- You need a few more tests to know more about the nature of the abnormality.
- You must see a doctor soon. This is necessary because if there is any disease in your cervix, it can get detected and treated early.
- Your doctor may take a small sample of tissue from your cervix (biopsy) and send it to a laboratory to confirm the suspected abnormality.
- The result of your biopsy will be available within 1–2 weeks’ time. You will have to attend the health facility to collect your report and see your doctor for advice.
- If your test shows any disease that is of concern, your doctor will treat you accordingly or refer you to the nearest specialized centre where all facilities for treatment are available.
- You can call me if you have any concern or queries, or you can give me your contact details and I can get in touch with you in case you need any help.
Test result is suspicious of cervical cancer: What to do next
What to expect after cervical biopsy or treatment for cervical pre-cancer

Talking points

- You will have watery vaginal discharge or blood streaked discharge for –
  - 3–5 days after a cervical biopsy;
  - about 4 weeks after treatment for cervical pre-cancer.
- You need not worry as this is normal and goes away on its own. No treatment is required.
- You will need to use sanitary napkins until the bleeding or discharge stops spontaneously.
- You may experience mild discomfort or cramping (similar to the cramps that women usually often have during menstruation) for a day or two. The cramp will go away on its own.
- If required, you can take the painkiller tablets that your doctor may have prescribed for you.
What to expect after cervical biopsy or treatment for cervical pre-cancer
Things to avoid after cervical biopsy or treatment for cervical pre-cancers

Talking points

- Avoid having sexual contact till the discharge stops completely. This can take:
  - 3–5 days after a cervical biopsy;
  - about 4 weeks after treatment for cervical pre-cancer.
- Ask your partner to use condoms if it is not possible to avoid sexual relation completely.
- Do NOT use vaginal tampons or wash the inside of your birth canal (vagina) for about 4 weeks – external washing should be continued as usual.
- You should not put anything inside your vagina, e.g. birth control jelly, till the bleeding or discharge stops.
Things to avoid after cervical biopsy or treatment for cervical precancers
Warning signs after cervical biopsy or treatment for cervical pre-cancers

Talking points

- After having a cervical biopsy or treatment for cervical pre-cancers, if you experience any of the following you should see your doctor as soon as possible:
  - fever with temperature >38 degrees C or with chills and rigors;
  - foul smelling vaginal discharge;
  - severe lower abdominal pain/cramps;
  - vaginal bleeding for more than 2 days or with clots (except during the expected time of menstruation).
Warning signs after cervical biopsy or treatment for cervical pre-cancers
Cervical cancer screening and management of cervical pre-cancers
Counselling cards