

Impact of change in the National Cervical Screen Program on Colposcopy referrals to a Metropolitan Hospital 2017-2020

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Background

In December 2017, the cervical screening program in Australia transitioned from cytology to HPV based screening. Modelling predicted a 60% rise in colposcopy referrals in the first 2 years of the new program². However, the National Cervical Screen Register (NCSR) has estimated that the proportion of cervical screening tests with a laboratory recommendation for colposcopy has more than doubled¹.

Objectives

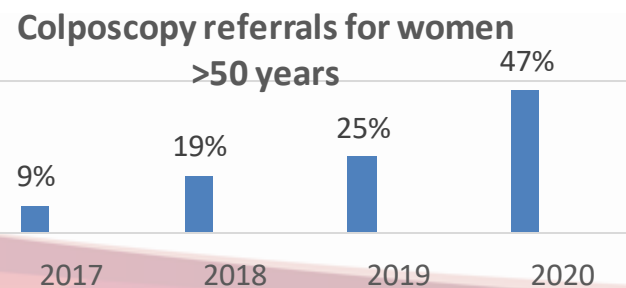
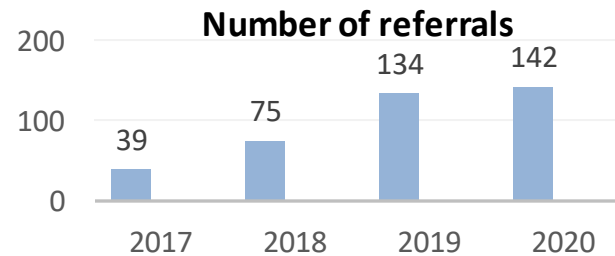
To evaluate the affect of new cervical screening program on colposcopy referrals to a metropolitan hospital.

Methods

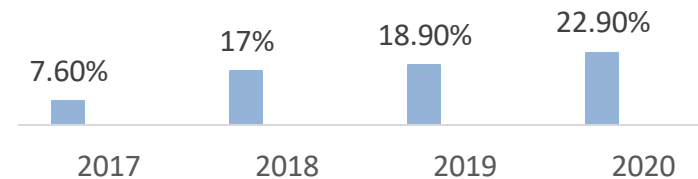
This was a retrospective study over a period of three months per year commencing a year prior to the changes and including 3 years afterwards (2017 to 2020) at SJoG Midland, WA. Parameters studied included number of referrals, age, referral smear and colposcopic appearance.

Results

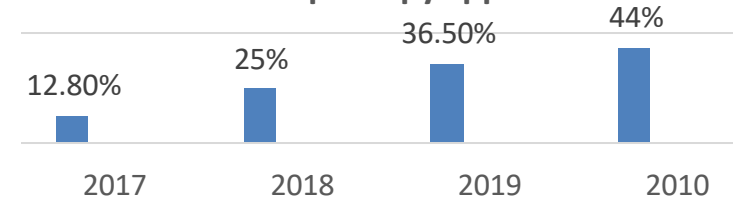
- Referrals doubled in 2018 and again in 2019. However they plateaued in 2020.
- There is significant increase in colposcopy referrals in over 50 year age group.
- Referral smear showing HPV other increased significantly from 2018 to 2020.
- Number of colposcopies with normal appearance is increasing almost fourfold as the referrals increase



Type 3 TZ on colposcopy



Normal colposcopy appearance



Conclusion

Overall referrals have increased fourfold over this period, and in a greater proportion of these referrals colposcopy added little information due to normal colposcopic appearance and no visible lesion.

References

1. Lessons from the renewal of the National Cervical Screening Program in Australia. Megan Smitha, Ian Hammond, Marion Saville. Public Health Res Practice 2019 Jul 31;29(2):2921914.
2. Cancer Council Australia Cervical Cancer Screening Guidelines Working Party. National Cervical Screening Program: guidelines for the management of screen-detected abnormalities, screening in specific populations and investigation of abnormal vaginal bleeding. Sydney: Cancer Council Australia; 2017.