

## Supplement – The petition - Stop May 1st Changes to Pap Smears - Save Women's Lives

Early detection and regular pap smears are key to preventing and treating women with cervical cancer.

This affects you. Whether you are a woman or you have a mother, sister, aunty or grandmother. May 1st will see changes that will put women's lives at risk but save the government money.

As of May 1st the following changes will be implemented to women's Pap Smears:

"-women will be invited when they are due to participate via the National Cancer Screening Register

-the time between tests will change from two to five years

-the age at which screening starts will increase from 18 years to 25 years

-women aged 70 to 74 years will be invited to have an exit test.

The new program will commence from 1 May 2017 when the new Cervical Screening Test will become available on the Medicare Benefits Schedule. Until this time, women aged between 18 and 69 years who have ever been sexually active, should continue to have Pap test when due."

The government run website states that:

"Based on new evidence and better technology, the National Cervical Screening Program will change from 1 May 2017 to improve early detection and save more lives."

How can there be early detection when the time between pap smears has been extended by 3 years? And the age to begin pap smears is raised to the age of 25?

If you think you are immune to cervical cancer because you are too young - think again. Today the nurse at my doctors surgery told me that she did the pap smear of a young women in her early 20s who was diagnosed with cervical cancer. The cervical cancer she had was a type that will NOT be tested for after May 1. It was NOT caused by the HPV Virus. This young girl was forced to return from an overseas holiday for immediate treatment and died within 6 months.

Prior to May 1 the website advises:

"It is very important that women continue to participate in the current two yearly Pap test program to ensure they are not at risk of developing cervical cancer.

Pap tests have already halved the incidence and mortality from cervical cancer since the introduction of the National Cervical Screening Program in 1991.

Women will be due for the first Cervical Screening Test two years after their last Pap test."

So why would the change be increased from every 2 to 5 years if it is still important to have this done?

The next extremely worrying point of the new smear will be the following:

"The new Cervical Screening Test detects human papillomavirus (HPV) infection, which is the first step in developing cervical cancer.

The procedure for collecting the sample for HPV testing is the same as the procedure for having a Pap smear. A Health Care Professional will still take a small sample of cells from the woman's cervix. The sample will be sent to a pathology laboratory for examination.

While the current Pap test can detect abnormal cell changes, the new Cervical Screening Test will detect the HPV infection that can cause the abnormal cell changes, prior to the development of cancer.

Persistent HPV infections can cause abnormal cell changes that may lead to cervical cancer.

However, this usually takes a long time, often more than 10 years."

This means that ONLY HPV caused cervical cancer will be detected. HPV infection only account for 80-85% of Cervical cancers.

WHAT ABOUT THE OTHER 15%?

Some of the reasoning behind the changes are:

" -cervical cancer in young women is rare (in both HPV vaccinated and unvaccinated women)

-despite screening women younger than 25 years of age for over 20 years there has been no change to the rates of cervical cancer or rates of death from cervical cancer in this age group

-investigating and treating common cervical abnormalities in young women that would usually resolve by themselves can increase the risk of pregnancy complications later in life

-the HPV vaccination has already been shown to reduce cervical abnormalities among women younger than 25 years of age and, in contrast to screening, is ultimately expected to reduce cervical cancer in this age group."

Women have now become a statistic - stating that it is rare in younger woman is not good enough.

It still happens and early detection and prevention is better than a cure.

Please see petition updates and responses. Dr Michael Gannon has responded to the petition.