

# Increase in Cervical Cancer Deaths due to Negligence in its Detection

## Quality Infrastructure

METROLOGY    STANDARDS    **TESTING**    CERTIFICATION    ACCREDITATION    QUALITY MANAGEMENT

### **PROBLEM** Tests with false results and delay in treatment

In 1989 the American Medical Association found out that between 15 % and 30 % of the tests for cervical cancer in New Zealand showed a false-negative. This means, the disease was not diagnosed and many women developed cancer without even knowing. Later investigations confirmed that negligence through out the analysis led to this false interpretation of results. This caused a significant delay in treatment or rather no treatment at all. Thus, the number of deaths caused by cervical cancer increased over the past years.

### **BACKGROUND** Negligence committed during the analysis

One of the tests used to detect cervical cancer is the Pap smear. Its use should practically eliminate the chances that a woman develops cancer without its detection, but a significant percentage of those tests were poorly implemented and led to false results. This is due to negligence in testing laboratories and a lack of standards to regulate the methods of testing and to guarantee a true prevention.

### **SOLUTION** Legislation and quality control of testing

Reducing the occurrences of false-negative Pap smear tests has been one of the main objectives of the legislation reform and the program of quality control throughout the entire country. The solution begins by improving the quality system of the testing laboratories and the elaboration of standards that require a level of zero-error results for the detection tests. The existence of such standards are the basis to commit a minimum of errors and thus to be able to treat the disease in time. This would prevent a significant part of the 7000 deaths that are caused by this disease each year.

### **IMPACT** Timely detection of the disease

Cervical cancer is one of the major causes of female mortality in the world, becoming one of the greatest battles of our society. For its detection and subsequent treatment, it is indispensable to have a more exhaustive quality control of testing with the required accuracy and reliability. Improvement of quality means additional economic costs for equipment and qualified staff, but the social benefit is much higher and more important. An early diagnosis and thus an immediate treatment can impede tragic consequences for the women and for the entire society.

## SOURCES

<http://www.malpracticelawfirm.net/cervical-cancer-negligence.html>  
<http://www.malpracticelawfirm.net/misread-pap-smear.html>