

5.R. Poster walk: Achieving universal health coverage: reducing health inequity

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Socioeconomic inequalities in cervical cancer screening in sub-Saharan Africa: Decomposition analysis

Florence Gyembuzie Wongnaah

B Ahinkorah^{1,2,3}, R Aboagye⁴, J Okyere^{5,6}, M Essuman^{7,8}, A Seidu^{3,9,10}, A Wongnaah^{11,12}

¹School of Clinical Medicine, University of New South Wales Sydney, Sydney, Australia

²School of Public Health, University of Technology Sydney, Sydney, Australia

³REMS Consultancy Services Limited, Sekondi-Takoradi, Western Region, Ghana

⁴Department of Family and Community Health, University of Health and Allied Sciences, Hohoe, Ghana

⁵Department of Population and Health, University of Cape Coast, PMB, Cape Coast, Ghana

⁶School of Nursing & Midwifery, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi, Kumasi, Ghana

⁷Department of Medical Laboratory Science, University of Cape Coast, Cape Coast, Ghana

⁸Department of Biological Sciences, Southern Illinois University Edwardsville, Edwardsville, Illinois, USA

⁹Centre for Gender and Advocacy, Takoradi Technical University, Takoradi, Ghana

¹⁰College of Public Health, James Cook University, Townsville, Australia

¹¹Department of Global Public Health, Karolinska Institutet, Stockholm, Sweden

¹²Disease Control and Prevention, Ghana Health Service, Kukurantumi, Ghana
Contact: florencewongnaah@yahoo.com

Background: Cervical cancer remains prevalent in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). Despite global efforts to eliminate this disease, its incidence continues to rise due to barriers in screening, vaccination, and treatment access. While studies address access barriers, little has explored inequality, often limited to single countries. Here, we examine socioeconomic inequalities in cervical cancer screening in SSA.

Methods: Data from the Demographic and Health Surveys of 10 SSA countries was used for the analysis. We stratified the study by wealth index and educational attainment as a measure of socioeconomic status. Socioeconomic status inequalities in cervical cancer screening were constructed using concentration curves. We then computed the concentration index to quantify socioeconomic inequality. To examine the factors associated with high socioeconomic inequality in cervical cancer screening, a decomposition analysis was conducted.

Results: Concentration curves showed screening uptake skewed towards the wealthy and educated across all countries, reflected by positive concentration indices (CIX=0.21; p-value<0.0001) except in Burkina Faso and Mauritius. Decomposition analysis revealed significant positive concentration indices for women with complete secondary (CIX=0.74) and higher education (CIX=0.91), those in the richest wealth index (CIX=0.35), separated women (CIX=0.08), currently working women (CIX=0.02), as well as those who were

exposed to reading newspaper/magazine (CIX=0.19), listening to radio (CIX=0.10), and watching TV (CIX=0.44).

Conclusions: Cervical cancer screening in SSA exhibits pro-rich and pro-higher educational inequalities. Urgent interventions are needed to restructure existing screening programs to prioritize accessibility and inclusion, particularly for women from poorer households and with a lower level of education. These findings are vital for policy-makers and public health practitioners to address cervical cancer screening disparities in SSA.

Key messages:

- Addressing socioeconomic inequalities in cervical cancer screening is crucial for improving public health in sub-Saharan Africa.
- Combatting socioeconomic disparities in cervical cancer screening is critical for achieving health equity in sub-Saharan Africa.