

CERVICAL CYTOLOGY REQUESTS AND HPV TESTING AT THE JOHN RADCLIFFE HOSPITAL

As you will all be aware it is now recognised that high risk Human Papilloma Viruses are responsible for cervical cancer and that the NHS Cervical Screening Programme is moving over to the use of HPV testing as part of the national cervical screening system in the UK. This will take place in two phases and is due to be implemented in Oxfordshire within the next few months. We are currently waiting for the final clearance from national office to proceed with procuring the necessary equipment.

First Year of HPV testing

The initial year (commencing March if HPV testing equipment can be obtained in time) will see all women who have low grade abnormalities (borderline changes and mild dyskaryosis) on their cervical test result be tested for the presence of high risk HPV (HPV triage). If it is present they will immediately be referred to the Colposcopy clinic for further assessment. If they do not have the high risk HPV virus present then they are at negligible risk for cervical cancer and will be recalled for another routine cervical test at the relevant time period, either 3 or 5 years depending on their age. Those that do have any treatment at the Colposcopy clinic will automatically have any follow up cervical cytology sample again tested for the presence of the high risk HPV types (test of cure).

Second and Subsequent Years

The second year of the process (commencing March 2013) will see **all** women who are on annual recall for previous abnormalities have their cervical sample tested for the presence of the high risk HPV types and sent on to Colposcopy for further assessment if it is present. If they do not carry the high risk HPV virus then they will be able to return to routine cervical testing, 3 or 5 yearly depending on their age, and therefore no longer require annual cervical testing.

Training

As part of this new testing process **ALL** cervical sample takers are required to undergo further training on the implications of the HPV test results that will be issued in conjunction with the cytology report – the HPV status of the woman will affect how her repeat tests are managed which will naturally cause some distress for patients. This training is being rolled out across Oxfordshire, Berkshire and Buckinghamshire during January to March this year and those sample takers that attend the training session can then cascade train others in the practice. Once HPV training has been undertaken, and registered, all sample takers will then be assigned a new sample taker code for use when taking a cervical sample at any practice or clinic in any of the three counties.

Next Steps

Once the Cytology laboratory in Oxford has a definite start date for issuing HPV tests as part of the cervical cytology report we will send out a mail shot to all the Oxfordshire practices. We know there may be teething problems, as with any new system, but are sure that if we all work together the benefits to women will be well worth it. If there are any queries please do not hesitate to contact the cytology laboratory on 01865 220490 and we will help if we can.