



## Review Article

# Psycho-social influences upon older women's decision to attend cervical screening: A review of current evidence



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## ABSTRACT

Cervical cancer is the fourth most common cancer in women worldwide (WHO, 2016). In many developed countries the incidence of cervical cancer has been significantly reduced by the introduction of organised screening programmes however, in the UK, a fall in screening coverage is becoming a cause for concern. Much research attention has been afforded to younger women but age stratified mortality and incidence data suggest that older women's screening attendance is also worthy of study. This paper provides a review of current evidence concerning the psycho-social influences that older women experience when deciding whether to attend cervical screening. Few studies have focussed on older women and there are significant methodological issues with those that have included them in their samples. Findings from these studies indicate several barriers which may deter older women from screening, such as embarrassment and logistical issues. Drivers to screening include reassurance and a sense of obligation. Physical, social and emotional changes that occur as women age may also have an impact on attendance. This review concludes that there is a clear need for better understanding of the perceptions of older women specifically with regard to cervical cancer and screening. Future research should inform the design of targeted interventions and provision of information to enable informed decision-making regarding cervical screening among older women.

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