

Letter to the Editor

By Katharine Sheehan, M.D.
Medical Director,
Planned Parenthood of
the Pacific Southwest

Dear Editor:

January is Cervical Health Awareness Month and Planned Parenthood urges women to take this opportunity to see if they are due for a checkup. Every year, approximately 13,000 women in the U.S. are diagnosed with cervical cancer, and about 4,000 American women die of the disease. Regular Pap tests and preventive care, including the HPV vaccine, are the keys to combating cervical cancer.

Planned Parenthood health centers offer routine cervical cancer screenings (Pap tests) and the HPV vaccine, which protects against the types of HPV that most often cause cervi-

cal cancer. Last year alone, Planned Parenthood health centers in California provided nearly 134,000 cervical cancer screenings to women.

Worldwide, cervical cancer is the third most common cancer among women and the fourth leading cause of cancer deaths among women. In the U.S., Latinas and African-American women are at higher risk for developing and dying of cervical cancer because they are less likely to have access to early screening and treatment. We are committed to closing the gaps in health disparities and serving every community.

The good news is that cervical cancer is one of the most preventable cancers out there. When caught early, the five-year survival rate is nearly 100 percent.

Cervical cancer takes many years

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to develop, so regular Pap tests can help detect abnormal cells early enough to prevent the disease. Receiving the HPV vaccination before sexual activity begins and regular Pap tests are the best ways to protect yourself against cervical cancer.

If you or someone you know needs a cervical cancer screening, please visit planned.org or call 1-888-743-PLAN (7526).

Sincerely,

Katharine Sheehan, M.D.

Medical Director, Planned
Parenthood of the Pacific
Southwest