

“India, the second most populous country in the world, accounts for 27% (77,100) of the total cervical cancer deaths.”

--From *Global Cancer Statistics* published in *CA: A Cancer Journal for Clinicians*.

27%. More than 1 in 4. Wow.

In this issue of *HPV News* we cover data on global cancer published in the American Cancer Society's clinical journal (see *Global Cancer Statistics: India Bears the Brunt Cervical Cancer Deaths* in the News Desk section). I knew that great health disparities exist between the rich and poor nations of the world. As editor of *HPV News*

, I was also aware that 80% or more of cervical cancers occur in low-resource areas. Still, I find it jarring that such a large percentage of cervical cancer deaths occur in just one country.

Cervical cancer is largely preventable through regular screening, which has traditionally meant Pap tests. Newer technologies, such as HPV tests and vaccines, give us even more tools to prevent this miserable disease. It's rare for a woman who goes for regular check-ups to develop cervical cancer, which makes the fact it ever occurs all the more heartbreaking.

According to the ACS, the disease is most often found in women who have either never had a Pap test or have gone many years without one. And just why is it that not all women go for regular Paps?

There are many barriers, even in the U.S. Access to health insurance and preventive services can still be an issue, and this is especially vexing in poor nations that lack the infrastructure needed for widespread Pap and vaccination programs. More mundane but important things like transportation, childcare, and taking time away from work can hinder access, too. Embarrassment and taboos against women being examined “down there” can also be a barrier.

To be sure, there are many worthy efforts underway to bring life-saving screening tests and vaccines to the women who need them most, such as the Global Initiative Against HPV and Cervical Cancer launched in 2010 by Columbia University physician [Dr. Shobha Krishnan](#). The Initiative's [website](#)

sums it up well: “We believe that a woman is the nucleus of her family - when she becomes ill or dies, her children, family and community suffer.” Dr. Krishnan and others working in this area deserve our support.

More than 275,000 women die each year from a cancer we essentially know how to prevent. I don't know which part of that sentence makes me sadder:"275,000" or "...we essentially know how to prevent."

--Fred Wyand (aka "Fredo")