

## Exploration of Information Needs for Cervical Cancer Patients Undergoing Treatment at Ocean Road Cancer Institute – Tanzania

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### ABSTRACT

#### Background

Cancer is a leading item on health agendas worldwide. According to World Health Organization's statistics (WHO 2019), cancer is the second leading cause of death globally. It affects about 9.6 million people annually and kills around 5 million people. Tanzania is among the countries with the highest cervical cancer burden in the world.

Cervical cancer is the leading cause of cancer morbidity and mortality among Tanzanian women. It ranks number one among the top ten cancers at Ocean Road Cancer Institute (ORCI), accounting for 40% of the total cancers and 60% of all female cancers.

**Objective:** To explore the perceptions and preferences of cervical cancer patients who are undergoing treatment at ORCI, regarding their information needs about their disease, treatment and prognosis.

**Method:** A qualitative study, semi structured single interviews for 14 participants with confirmed cervical cancer diagnosis, at Ocean Road Cancer Institute - Tanzania.

**Results:** Participants described their experiences and expressed the high unmet needs of information in aspects of their disease, its treatment and prognosis. Patient to patient was the main source of information, jeopardizing its validity. Health providers' high volume of work and poor communication skills were some of the major barriers for patients to access accurate information.

#### Conclusions:

Most cancer patients express a preference for the health care provider to give them as much information as possible, be that good or bad news.

Despite evidence from this study that most patients want information about their illness, more often health care providers fail to do so. Lack of information intensifies the patients' anxiety and uncertainties about their disease and prognosis.