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## **Awareness and reactions to a free cancer screening programme organised for women living in an urban slum settlement in Nigeria**

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Screening has been recommended as an easiest way of detecting, treating and reducing the burden of cervical cancer. Women are the target population for cervical cancer. In Nigeria, very low proportions of women have participated in screening. Information on reasons for unwillingness and reluctance to undergo cancer screening among women has not been fully documented in Nigeria and community-based studies are also limited. This study aimed at awareness and response to screening based on economic status of women in an urban slum in Nigeria.

Two day cervical screening programme without charge was organized for all women at the community market square. Prior to the intervention, advocacy visits were paid to the community heads, market women leaders informing them of the programme and obtaining their consent and co-operation. Thereafter, community wide announcements explaining the details, benefits, venue and schedule for the intervention was carried out for a period of 21 days. Convenience sampling technique was employed to select participants using a well-

structured key in depth interview guide exploring awareness, importance, and factors influencing their decisions to come for the screening exercise. Data was analysed and presented thematically.

About 100 women were came out and presented themselves for screening, in the place. Lack of financial capacity to afford screening, poor knowledge, were listed by women as some barriers to screening. Findings reveal that almost all women do not know about cervical cancer and HPV, some attributed cervical cancer to breast cancer, and many may never go for screening if not for the screening intervention brought to them by Lifetouch Africa NGO, and the service is more acceptable to them when it is free.

Conclusively, women respond better to participate in screening when it is free compared to when it is to be paid for, hence periodic nationwide free cervical screening by government is recommended.

**Keyword:** Screening Response, Affordability of Screening.

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