International Agency for Research on Cancer

World Health Organization

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New study provides evidence to improve cervical precancer detection and management in Latin America:
Results from the ESTAMPA multicentre study in Latin America

Lyon, France, 13 November 2026 – A large study by the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) and partners provides new evidence on how the risk of cervical precancer and cancer can be assessed by combining human papillomavirus (HPV) testing, cervical cytology, and colposcopy findings. The study, conducted across nine countries in Latin American and published today in *The Lancet Regional Health – Americas*,[1] aims to inform the development of more-tailored approaches to cervical cancer screening and management, particularly in low- and middle-income countries.

Conducted within the ESTAMPA project, one of the largest multicountry initiatives on cervical cancer screening in Latin America, the study included more than 44 000 women aged 30–64 years in Argentina, Bolivia, Colombia, Costa Rica, Honduras, Mexico, Paraguay, Peru, and Uruguay.

Results

The findings highlight the high underlying risk of cervical intraepithelial neoplasia of grade 3 or higher (CIN3+) among women in Latin America, showing how this risk varies according to HPV test results, the severity of cervical cell changes, and colposcopy findings.

The researchers found substantial differences in the risk of high-grade cervical precancer and cancer according to women's HPV test results and subsequent clinical assessments. Among women who tested positive for HPV, 12% were found to have high-grade cervical precancer (CIN3+) or cancer, compared with 0.04% of women who tested negative for HPV.

"These findings highlight the value of combining information from different screening and diagnostic tests to better identify women at higher risk of cervical precancer and cancer," says Dr Joan Valls, a co-author of the study and a visiting scientist at IARC. "This could help support clinical decisions on when to perform biopsies, provide treatment, or recommend follow-up, while making more effective use of available health-care resources."

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[1] Valls J, Jerónimo J, Venegas G, Celis M, González M, Sosa C, et al. (2026). Estimating cervical precancer and cancer risk based on HPV testing, cervical cytology and colposcopic impression: results from the ESTAMPA multicentric study in Latin America. *Lancet Reg Health Am*. Published online 13 November 2026. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lana.2026.101685

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Cervical cancer

Cervical cancer remains a major public health challenge worldwide. The vast majority of deaths from cervical cancer occur in low- and middle-income countries. Although the disease is largely preventable through HPV vaccination, screening, and timely treatment of precancerous lesions, access to effective screening and follow-up remains uneven.

Risk-based approaches, which take into account the results of different tests to estimate an individual's likelihood of having significant cervical disease, are increasingly important in cervical cancer prevention.

"The ESTAMPA study provides important evidence from Latin America, helping us better understand how different screening and diagnostic results can be used to assess the risk of cervical precancer and cancer," says Dr Partha Basu, Head of the Early Detection, Prevention, and Infections Branch at IARC. "With further validation and adaptation to local settings, these findings could help improve how women at risk are identified and managed through HPV-based screening programmes, particularly in low- and middle-income countries."

Note to Editors

The findings represent a further contribution to international efforts to improve cervical cancer prevention and accelerate progress towards the World Health Organization (WHO) goal of eliminating cervical cancer as a public health problem.

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The International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) is part of the World Health Organization. Its mission is to coordinate and conduct research on the causes of human cancer, the mechanisms of carcinogenesis, and to develop scientific strategies for cancer control. The Agency is involved in both epidemiological and laboratory research and disseminates scientific information through publications, meetings, courses, and fellowships. If you wish your name to be removed from our press release emailing list, please write to com@iarc.who.int.