

Introduction

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I have pleasure in presenting the 'Guide for smertakers' - a publication of The National Cervical Screening Programme.

This guide has been developed as the reference for General Practitioners and Practice Nurses who take cervical smears in the primary care setting.

It provides an overview of how CervicalCheck - The National Cervical Screening Programme operates and reflects current best practice in the taking and management of quality smears for women in their community in line with the CervicalCheck Women's Charter.

This guide has been developed by the Smertaker Training Unit which has been established in the Programme office in Limerick. This Unit facilitates a training programme that is delivered through a number of professional academic bodies, currently the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland, the National University of Ireland Galway and the Irish College of General Practitioners.

This work is the culmination of learning gained through the authors' engagement in cervical screening and smertaker training from the Irish Cervical Screening Programme Phase 1.

I would like to acknowledge the pivotal role that smertakers play in promoting and delivering cervical screening to women. Together we aim to reach an 80 per cent coverage target of our eligible population in order to reduce the incidence of and mortality associated with cervical cancer in Ireland. This guide is an essential resource in working towards the success of a quality assured national programme.



Dr Marian O'Reilly

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National Cancer Screening Service
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Governance of the Irish Cervical Screening Programme was transferred to the National Cancer Screening Service in January 2007.

The authors wish to express their appreciation for all the guidance and support that has been received to date from colleagues, professional and academic bodies and international cervical screening programmes.

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This guide is intended primarily for use by smertakers for the National Cervical Screening Programme. This guide can be used by doctors, nurses, supervisors and trainers:

- as a reference manual, providing up-to-date information about screening for cervical cancer
- as a resource for clinical practice
- as a support for education and training in the Smertaker Training Programme
- as a checklist to support supervision
- as an aid to assist smertakers to give quality information to women who present for screening.

The development of the guide was based on the following:

- a comprehensive review of national and international literature and research findings
- inputs from a management group consisting of experts in the field
- recurrent reviews of the Guide at each stage of development by a range of external experts.

The underlying principles that directed the development of the guide included:

- the importance of screening in reducing the incidence of and mortality from cervical cancer
- the importance of well-trained smertakers who have access to up-to-date information based on sound scientific evidence
- the rights of women to have a positive smertaking experience in an overall quality assured programme
- the development of a culture of quality, measurement, outcomes, education and research as per the 2006 Strategy for Cancer Control in Ireland.

The guide is composed of six sections with associated appendices and references for further reading, a Glossary and a Useful contacts list. It can be used as a whole or users can focus on the sections that are relevant to their practice or to specific situations. Examples, recommended procedures, checklists and cross-references to other sections within the guide are clearly set out in separate boxes within the text. The guide is presented to allow for regular updates¹ in evolving practices in clinical care and to accommodate emerging research developments and regulatory changes.

If you have any queries about this Guide, or any other aspect of the Programme, we will be delighted to deal with these.

Please contact the CervicalCheck Team at
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¹ The date of issue, section and page numbers are at the foot of each page. Please ensure that your copy is the most up-to-date version of the Guide by checking the CervicalCheck website www.cervicalcheck.ie