

# Cervical screening: a primary care concern

## Introduction

Cervical screening offers the best protection against cervical cancer, saving approximately 5,000 lives in the UK annually<sup>1,2</sup>. Cervical screening targets healthy populations to identify individuals with early changes to their cervical cells. It is now known that infection with the Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) is the cause for malignant change for almost all cases of cervical cancer. Subsequent monitoring and treatment prevent 8 out of 10 cervical cancers from developing<sup>3</sup>. Without treatment, cells can potentially develop into cancer<sup>2</sup>.

Although cervical cancer is a preventable disease it remains a global health concern<sup>4</sup>. It remains one of the leading causes of death from cancer in women worldwide and this is projected to increase<sup>4</sup>. Cervical cancer accounts for 2% of all new cancer cases in women in the UK and on average six people in Scotland are diagnosed with cervical cancer each week<sup>5,6</sup>. Cervical cancer is the most common cancer in women under 35 years of age in Scotland<sup>7</sup>. Uptake of cervical screening is less than ideal in many countries and primary health care clinicians have a prominent role in improving this rate.

We recognise that each country in the UK has its own cervical screening programme and that some of this module will refer to topics that may be “Scotland only” such as the Community Health Index (CHI) number.

The aim of this module is to:

- Update clinicians about the change in the screening test
- Provide information and resources that may be useful at the time of screening
- Help clinicians offer screening to groups with previous low levels of uptake