

Objective



Travellers have poor uptake of cervical screening due to increased mobility across health care providers. Lack of formal education and inability to read or write present barriers to access care. Over the years travellers now reside in stable accommodation and are sending their children to formal education to primary school level. The practice population studies had a high number of indigenous travellers living at a local site registered in one surgery. The study undertook surveying travellers who did not attend for cervical screening to understand barriers to accessing screening

Methodology

All the female travellers aged between 25-65 years who are registered at the surgery were selected for interview and 49 patients were contacted.

Design

During the covid pandemic due to travel restrictions many travellers remained on the traveller site. The surgery was able to contact many of the women for screening and this helped bring up the uptake rates to 88%. 48 women (12%) who declined were surveyed using a mixed methods study .

Results

Barriers to the surgery scheduling smear tests include inability to reach patients (20%) due to frequent change of mobile numbers , failure of post reaching the traveller site. 5 women who declined smear felt smears are painful and embarrassing. It is common for travellers not to be sexually active before marriage, and a perception that taking a smear will compromise their virginity was a given as a reason. In addition 14 patients did not think a repeat smear after a negative index smear would be necessary.



Analysis

Not
important!

Patients were asked whether or not they were attending their regular 3/5 year smear tests. Only 16 patients attended their smear tests regularly and 30 (majority) of the patients did not attend their regular smear tests, with 9 patients who were unable to be contacted.

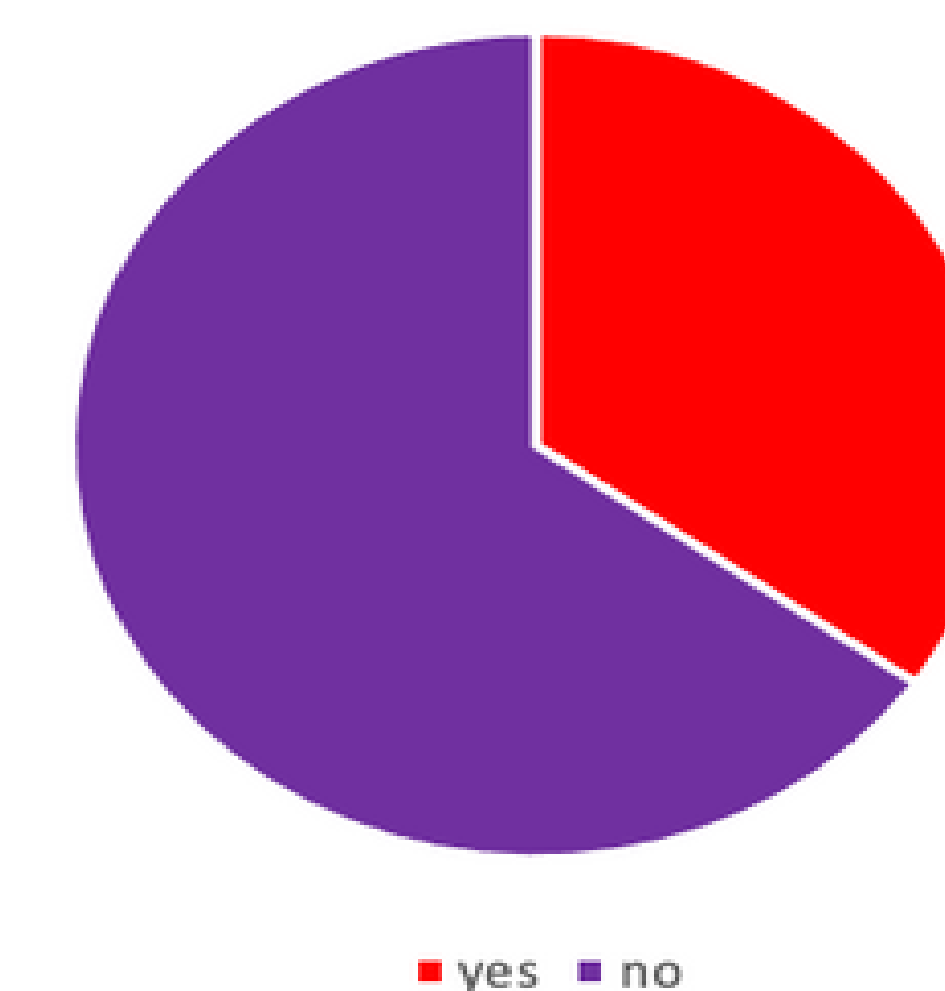
There are some comments here by which patients said why they did not attend their regular smear tests, the most common comment being 'Can't come to the surgery too far!'

Unable to
contact
the patient

Can't come
surgery too
far!

Not
sexually
active!

Had Regular Smears



Happy to
attend

Conclusion

Travellers are a unique population whose frequent change of address lifestyle and traditional beliefs dominate their culture which is changing slowly. As younger women are achieving primary care education and are being better informed we see a slow increase in cervical smear uptake rates. Conversely the covid pandemic improved uptake rates as travel restrictions enabled the surgery to approach this population. Stability of residence education and dispelling traditional myths will remain an ongoing challenge. Our study has improved our understanding of this unique group of women and enabled us to improve smear uptake during the pandemic and we now provide more education when smears are taken to increase repeat smear rates

Related Literature

1. WEC. Tackling the inequalities faced by Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Communities. London: Women and Equalities Committee, House of Commons; 2019.