
Executive summary

Health Council of the Netherlands. Population screening act: study into self-sampling as primary screening for cervical cancer. The Hague: Health Council of the Netherlands, 2014; publication no. 2014/32.

In this advisory report the Committee on Population Screening assessed a joined license application by the VU Medical Centre Amsterdam, ErasmusMC Rotterdam and the University Medical Centre Nijmegen. The application concerns a scientific study into the clinical sensitivity of a self-sampling hrHPV test compared with a hrHPV test on a cervical smear performed by the GP in the cervical cancer screening program. The aim of the study is to determine whether the self-sampling hrHPV test is not inferior to the cervical smear by the GP. This was already investigated for women who did not attend regular screening (non-responders). The present study is about all women qualified for screening, as, according to the Health Council of the Netherlands, the results in the total target population may differ from the non-responders.

Offering self-sampling of cervicovaginal material for hrHPV testing can lower the threshold – as women do not have to go to the GP for a smear – which could increase coverage in the screening program.

The Committee believes that the research meets the legal requirements of scientific validity and that it corresponds to the rules and regulations of medical practice. The usefulness of participating in the study is considered favourable compared to the risks and burden for participants. There is no reason to oppose to this research from a public health perspective.

The committee advises the Minister to grant the license. As a final point the committee stressed the importance of a separate investigation into the willingness to participate in self-sampling as primary screening for cervical cancer.
