



26. March 2021 – Launch of the CBIG-SCREEN project – a collaborative European-wide effort to tackle inequalities in cervical cancer screening.

Cervical cancer is the third most common gynaecological cancer and the second most common in women under 45 years. In Europe, over 61,000 women are diagnosed with cervical cancer each year and almost 26,000 of them will die of it – each death a tragedy considering that cervical cancer is today a preventable and treatable disease. The relatively high death rate has been largely attributed to low vaccination coverage and low cervical cancer screening rates among vulnerable women. Though screening programmes have been shown to drastically reduce cervical cancer mortality, they remain largely inaccessible and underused by subpopulations of vulnerable women, creating inequality in the European healthcare system and adding to the challenges underserved populations already face in their efforts to maintain their socioeconomic and physical health.

Healthcare inequality is at the heart of CBIG-SCREEN's effort to provide vulnerable subpopulations with functioning access to cervical cancers screening and thus improve health outcomes and reduce associated healthcare and societal costs. The vulnerable subpopulations CBIG-SCREEN will focus on are women of low socioeconomic status, women living with HIV or other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), incarcerated women, sex workers and migrants who may not have had access to cancer screening in their country of origin but find it difficult to navigate health care systems in their new homes. The consortium will work in collaboration with these women to identify and develop strategies to meet their varied and specific needs, in order to attract them to the screening programmes, and to retain them from initial test to treatment. Through continuous dialogue we aim to convince policymakers to adopt these strategies ensuring that national screening programmes reach out to promote these interventions to communities of the underserved women.

CBIG-SCREEN will thus create a Europe-wide knowledge framework around barriers to cervical cancer screening and generate policies, programmes, communications and other required services to meet the needs of these underserved sub-populations of women with inherent high-risk of cervical cancer and low (perceived) access to proper healthcare routes. Our interventions aim to reduce health inequality by increasing screening ratios among vulnerable women from 26% to 45% which could ensure 6,000 to 7,000 more women will survive each year.

Prof Marc Bardou, Coordinating physician at the Clinical Investigation Center Inserm 1432, who leads the CBIG-SCREEN effort states that: *“Too many policies are built in a top-down approach. We are prioritising collaboration with the target group in order to co-construct the new policy intervention and make them more acceptable. Through engaging all stakeholders, in particular the vulnerable and underserved women themselves, we are aiming to identify their varied and specific needs, develop strategies around them, and convince policymakers to adopt these strategies. By involving and listening to the women that the project seeks to help, we thus believe we can develop the required tailored strategies that convince the vulnerable and underserved subpopulations of women to partake and remain in cervical cancer screening programmes.”*

The CBIG-SCREEN project is coordinated by the French National Institute for health and medical research (Inserm) and brings together public health experts, epidemiologists, regional cancer institutes, a pan-European umbrella organisation of national and regional cancer societies, a non-governmental institution that promotes gender equity in public health, and the WHO specialised agency for cancer research, IARC.

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- 3 London school of hygiene and tropical medicine (LSHTM), UK
- 4 Azienda Unita Sanitaria Locale di Reggio Emilia (AUSL-IRCCS), Italy
- 5 Instituto de saude publica da universidade do porto (ISPUP), Portugal
- 6 Tartu Ulikool (UTARTU), Estonia
- 7 Universitatea Babes Bolyai (UBB), Romania
- 8 Institute of Oncology Cluj-Napoca (IOCN), Romania
- 9 European institute of women's health limited (EIWH), Ireland
- 10 Centre international de recherche sur le cancer (IARC), France
- 11 Ecole d'économie de Paris (PSE), France
- 12 Health psychology research center (HPRC), Bulgaria
- 13 European cancer leagues (ECL), Belgium
- 14 Inserm Transfert SA (IT), France

Acknowledgments

CBIG-SCREEN, has received funding from the EU Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under Grant Agreement No 964049.