

Cancer and Contraception: Cervix

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HPV is the recognised main cause of cervical neoplasia. Polymerase chain reaction-based tests were able to detect HPV DNA in 99.7% of cervical cancer specimens from 22 countries world-wide. Such strong evidence that HPV is the main cause of cervical cancer influences greatly the study of potential co-factors. A recent large case-control study¹ focused on HPV-positive women under the assumption that, in the absence of persistent HPV infection, cofactors such as OC use would not be important. It was a pooled analysis of 8 case-control studies of histologically confirmed squamous cell invasive cervical carcinoma (ICC) and carcinoma in situ (CIS) carried out by the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC). A total of 1,676 cases (1,465 ICC and 211 CIS) and 255 controls were HPV DNA-positive, corresponding to 94% of the ICC cases, 72% of the CIS cases and 11% of the controls combined. A use of OC less than 5 years was not associated with an increased risk, but use of OC for 5-9 years showed an OR of 2.4 (95% CI 1.3-4.4) and use for 10+ years an OR of 2.9 (95% CI 1.6-5.3), after allowance for age, education, parity, number of sexual partners and of Pap smears. The increased risk among long-term OC users did not vary by time since first or last use. OC use was not associated with HPV DNA-positivity among control women. These findings are consistent with an ongoing meta-analysis of 28 cohort and case-control studies on OC and cervical carcinoma, which will be presented.

¹Moreno V, Bosch FX, Muñoz N ... Franceschi S. *Oral contraceptives and cervical cancer: pooled analysis of a multi-centre case-control study. Lancet 2002 (in press)*