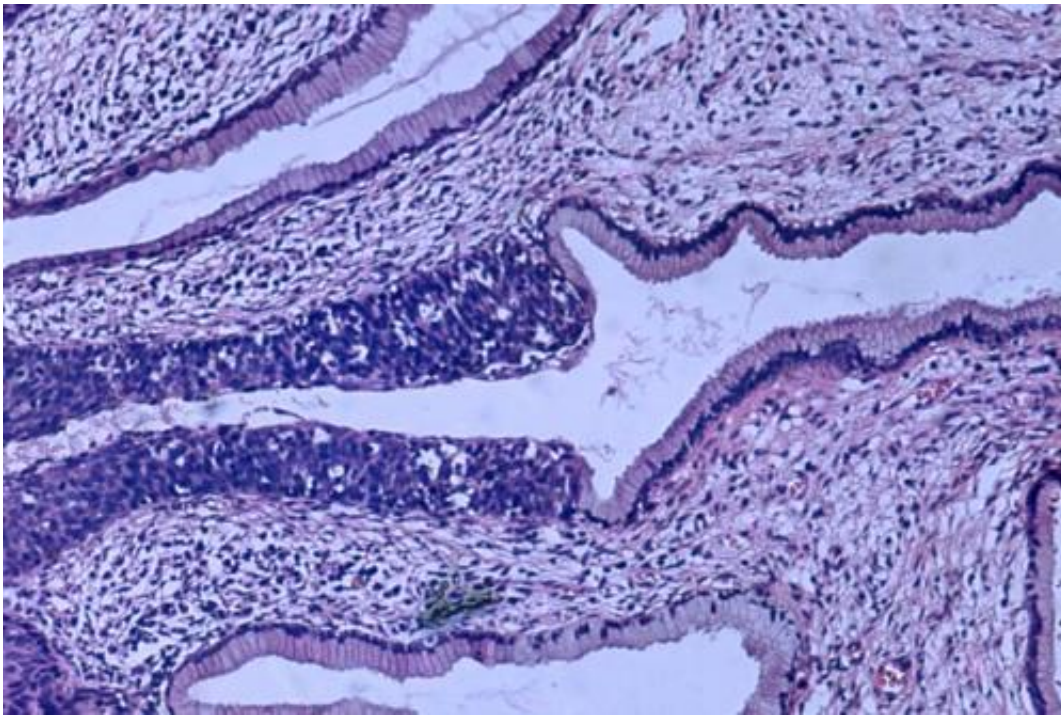


# Financial barriers to cervical cancer screening

June 29 2021

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High grade dysplasia (carcinoma in situ) in the uterine cervix. The abnormal epithelium is extending into a mucus gland to the left of centre. This disease can progress to invasive cancer (squamous cell carcinoma) of the cervix. Credit: Haymanj/public domain

Among low-income, uninsured, or publicly insured women ages 25-64 years who were not up to date on cervical cancer screening, 72% perceived financial barriers to screening. The most commonly reported barriers were screening appointment costs (71%) and follow-up/future

treatment costs (44%), according to a study published in the peer-reviewed *Journal of Women's Health*.

Screening is effective at reducing the incidence of and mortality associated with cervical cancer. However, disparities exist in cervical cancer incidence and mortality and in [cervical cancer screening](#) based on poverty level, insurance status, race, and ethnicity. Only about 64% of [uninsured women](#), 78% of publicly insured women, and 75% of [low-income](#) women have been screened in accordance with national screening guidelines. Perceived financial barriers to screening likely affect cervical cancer screening adherence.

"Most notably, this study illustrates the importance of the availability and awareness of health insurance and other financial resources to reduce perceived financial barriers to screening," state Jennifer Smith, Ph.D., University of North Carolina, and coauthors of the study.

"Insurance status heavily influences the actual out-of-pocket costs incurred from the cervical cancer screening appointment and labs, which may influence perceived cost burden and barriers."

"Low-income women need greater access to insurance coverage options, Medicaid eligibility, or free screening programs so they can undergo regular cervical cancer screening without perceived financial barriers to care," says *Journal of Women's Health* Editor-in-Chief Susan G. Kornstein, MD, Executive Director of the Virginia Commonwealth University Institute for Women's Health, Richmond, VA.

**More information:** Caitlin B. Biddell et al, Perceived Financial Barriers to Cervical Cancer Screening and Associated Cost Burden Among Low-Income, Under-Screened Women, *Journal of Women's Health* (2021). [DOI: 10.1089/jwh.2020.8807](https://doi.org/10.1089/jwh.2020.8807)

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