



Media release

Cervical screening self-sampling now available to under screened women

VCS Pathology will be the first pathology service in Australia to commence testing of self-collected samples from eligible women under the renewed National Cervical Screening Program.

This initiative will enable women who avoid Pap smears to take the sample themselves and have access to lifesaving cervical screening tests. A Victorian pilot project of self-sampling involving VCS has demonstrated high acceptability of self-sampling amongst under screened Aboriginal, Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) and disadvantaged women, with 86% of women who refused a practitioner collected sample accepting the invitation to self-sample.

Executive Director of VCS Associate Professor Marion Saville said today “This is an exciting day for cervical cancer prevention in Australia. Our analyses of screening registry data have consistently shown that of women who develop cervical cancer in Australia at least 80% are under or never screened. There are some women for whom accepting a speculum examination is very difficult, and potentially traumatic, and self-sampling offers a way to effectively reach these women.”

Self-sampling (collection of a vaginal swab for HPV testing) is available to women who are at least 30 years old and who are under screened (4 years or more since last Pap test) or have never been screened and who decline a practitioner collected specimen. VCS is the first laboratory in Australia approved by NATA to test self-samples as part of the program.

Director of Molecular Biology and Biochemistry at VCS, Dr David Hawkes said “Whilst there is some loss of sensitivity (92-94% sensitivity in our study) compared to a practitioner collected sample, we know that HPV testing of self-samples is still more effective at detecting underlying high grade cervical lesions than a Pap test. We are very pleased to offer this testing as part of our expert HPV testing services.”

VCS is a not for profit organisation with over 50 years of experience in providing high quality laboratory services supporting cervical cancer prevention in Australia. Screening samples from Victorian women are processed without charge and those from eligible women in other jurisdictions (Medicare enrolled and under or never screened according to the National Guidelines) will be bulk billed. VCS can receive specimen referrals from other laboratories around Australia or directly from practitioners.

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For more information:

- Self sampling pilot study: see ‘Self collection Pilot Project improving access to cervical screening for under screened women’

<http://www.vcs.org.au/publications/scientific>

- Practical information on self-sampling



VCS Pathology

Leaders in HPV & cervical screening

<http://www.vcspathology.org.au/practitioners/self-sampling-resources>

- National Cervical Screening Program Practitioner Resources

<http://www.vcspathology.org.au/practitioners/renewal-documents>

- National Guidelines on self-sampling

https://wiki.cancer.org.au/australia/Clinical_question:Self-collected_vaginal_samples