



FOR RELEASE
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Local physicians, community nurses join national cervical cancer awareness move

WHITEHORSE – Four Whitehorse physicians and several community health nurses are leading the drive to encourage Yukon women to get their pap tests as part of National Cervical Cancer Awareness Week, October 23-29.

Yukon's Chief Medical Officer of Health, Dr. Brendan Hanley, said Yukon has signed onto the national campaign sponsored by the Federation of Medical Women of Canada for the first time.

"The real push is to enable patients without a family physician to still have access to a pap test," Hanley said. "Nationally, there are between 1,300 and 1,500 new cases of cervical cancer each year and 90 per cent of those cases could be prevented through regular screening."

The overall purpose of the national campaign is to increase awareness of cervical cancer and the importance of prevention. Knowledge, screening and vaccination are keys to helping reduce the number of women who die needlessly every year from this largely preventable cancer. A pap test is a female internal exam that looks for changes in the cells of the cervix.

National statistics from the Public Health Agency of Canada show that 15 per cent of women have never had a pap test and 30 per cent haven't been screened in more than three years.

The Yukon initiative is spearheaded by Dr. Rahel Ahmed who, along with three other physicians at Whitehorse Medical Clinic, will provide the screening tests on Tuesday, October 25 at Whitehorse Medical Clinic, to women who are without a family physician.

"I think this is one small step we can take that will benefit the health of Yukon women who don't have access to a family physician right now," Ahmed said. "Another part of the campaign is to encourage other physicians to speak with their female patients and make sure they are screened." Ahmed added that participating physicians have also agreed to ensure appropriate follow-up for those patients who receive an abnormal result.

In rural Yukon, community health nurses will be similarly encouraging women to get tested if they are due, or overdue, for a pap test.

Whitehorse women interested in seeing a physician for a pap test are asked to call Whitehorse Medical Clinic at 393-6646 to make an appointment. Appointments will run throughout the day and into the evening except during lunch and supper breaks. Women in rural Yukon should contact their community health centre.

The National Pap Test Campaign is supported by the Yukon Medical Association and Yukon Health and Social Services.

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