

Version 1, published 4 November 2014

Announcement of methodological changes to Cervical Screening Programme, England, Statistics for 2013-14 [NS] ¹

Changes in reporting and classification of cervical cytology

In January 2013 the NHS Cancer Screening Programmes published the third edition of 'Achievable standards, Benchmarks for reporting, and Criteria for evaluating cervical cytopathology' (ABC3)². This outlined a new classification for abnormal cervical cytology, as agreed by the NHSCSP and the British Association for Cytopathology.

Historically, the UK has used the British Society for Clinical Cytology (1986) classification to report cervical cytology. Elsewhere, other classifications are used, notably the Bethesda Classification (Solomon et al, 2004) which was introduced in the US in 1991. The new classification adopted by the NHSCSP narrows the gaps between the two systems and makes it easier to make international comparisons.

The new classification for abnormal cervical cytology:

- divides the category 'borderline change' into 'squamous' and 'endocervical' categories.
- divides dyskaryosis into 'low-grade' and 'high-grade' categories
- divides glandular neoplasia into 'endocervical' and 'non-cervical' categories

Table 1 summarises the changes in terminology which are also used in the publication.

¹ [NS] denotes that the publication has National Statistics status

² See <http://www.cancerscreening.nhs.uk/cervical/publications/nhscsp01.html>

Table 1: Summary of changes to terminology

| Previous terminology (BSC 1986) | New Terminology | Result Code |
|--|--|-------------|
| Borderline change | Borderline change in squamous cells | 8 |
| | Borderline change in endocervical cells | 9 |
| Mild dyskaryosis | Low-grade dyskaryosis | 3 |
| Borderline change with koilocytosis | | |
| Moderate dyskaryosis | High-grade dyskaryosis (moderate) | 7 |
| | | 4 |
| Severe dyskaryosis | High-grade dyskaryosis (severe) | |
| Severe dyskaryosis / ?Invasive | High-grade dyskaryosis/?invasive squamous carcinoma | 5 |
| | ?Glandular neoplasia of endocervical type | 6 |
| ?Glandular neoplasia | ?Glandular neoplasia (non-cervical) | 0 |
| | | |

The changes, which were implemented from April 2013, included the following changes to the classification of cervical cytology samples which will impact on the statistics reported in this publication:

1. Prior to April 2013, many samples showing koilocytotic change (which occurs as a result of HPV infection) would have been recorded as borderline change with koilocytosis and recorded as result code '8'. From April 2013 all such cases should have been classified as low grade dyskaryosis (mild dyskaryosis under the old terminology), result code '3'. Although the precise impact of this change is not known, a significant proportion of what used to be classified as borderline change should therefore be classified as low grade dyskaryosis.
2. Samples which might previously have been classified as 'borderline – high-grade dyskaryosis not excluded', and recorded as result code '8', may have been recorded as high-grade dyskaryosis (moderate), result code '7', or 'borderline - not otherwise specified', result code 8, from April 2013. Again, the impact of this change is not known but is expected to be less than for samples showing koilocytotic change.
3. The division of ?glandular neoplasia into two categories impacts on a number of tables in the report. ?glandular neoplasia (non-cervical) was previously included in tables showing test results of ?glandular neoplasia. These test results are now given result code '0' and shown in the Data Tables as negative test results as they are not cervical abnormalities. The number of test results showing ?glandular neoplasia is relatively small and so the impact of this change on that group is substantial. The addition of ?glandular neoplasia (non-cervical) to the negative



result category has minimal impact as this group makes up the majority of sample test results. Positive predictive value (PPV) and Referral Value (RV) calculations no longer include ?glandular neoplasia (non-cervical) test results/referrals.

Changes to the KC data collection forms are required before borderline change in squamous cells and endocervical cells can be distinguished in the reported statistics. In the meantime these two categories are reported together as borderline change.

Tests showing ?glandular neoplasia (non-cervical) have been recorded on the KC data collection forms as negative from April 2013 onwards as they are non-cervical abnormalities and therefore are dealt with outside of the cervical screening programme.

Tables in the publication affected by the changes above are caveated appropriately.