Fighting Cervical Cancer in Rural India
The Innovative Kutch Model.

Cervical cancer is the only cancer that is preventable by safe, simple and inexpensive methods and yet, one woman dies every 7-8 minutes from this disease in India. In addition, this cancer peaks between the ages of 35-55 years, not only taking the lives of young women, but devastating young families with children along the way. For a few pennies a day, the one-stop-screen-and-treat program can change this trend. To achieve this end, GIAHC continually adopts progressive health strategies, raises awareness and encourages innovation.

GIAHC’s strength lies in part in its ability to partner with programs already engaged with health care in the community and build on their trust and infrastructure when introducing new methods for cervical screening. It acts as a coordinating platform between communities at its grassroots level, and hospitals and academic institutions to help raise.

GIAHC’s first screening program was initiated in the Kutch district of Gujarat, where Bhojay Sarvoday Trust Hospital and Kutch Mahila Vikas Sangathan (KMVS: a grass roots collective of rural women that has worked on public health issues for over two decades) put their efforts together and developed a cervical cancer screening program in their community. Community health workers were trained in the screening procedure at the Tata Memorial Hospital in Mumbai and the Adyar Cancer Institute in Chennai. They travel into the rural communities to spread awareness and conduct screening camps in order to lighten the burden for physicians who can delegate their time to other health efforts.

Furthermore, students from Yale and Harvard have spent time in Kutch to build the program. Michele Baldwin, a woman diagnosed with cervical cancer in 2009, reached out to the organization after hearing of its work. Though sick, she bravely became the first woman to paddle board 700 miles on the Ganga River and dedicated the journey to raising cervical cancer awareness in India. She was featured extensively in India’s news media, and helped to spread the message that cervical cancer is preventable by safe, simple and inexpensive methods.

GIAHC feels very honored to be involved in the Kutch region and to work with its dedicated people. However, one of major challenges that it faces in the district is to recruit qualified personnel such as nurses and program coordinators who can supervise the work of the community health workers, and bring the program to international standards. The Kutch project has been presented by GIAHC at several international conferences and we hope to continue to make progress with the continued and growing support from the community.

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