

Oklahoma ranks low in Cervical Cancer screening. Why are we having trouble? What barriers do *you* see to screening your patients for cervical cancer?

- 1) You know, on this we can't even blame cost. With the health department programs, this is basic problem of "if it ain't broke, don't fix it". That being said, many women do not understand that there are no early warning signs of cervical cancer. I feel that education is the primary approach. Women need to know the risks of not being screened. When women are on medications that require visits such as birth control, hormone replacement, blood pressure, or cholesterol, it is easier to remind them and make them schedule for a well woman examination. If women have no health issues, many do not seek preventive services. Education is the best way I can think of to have women come on for services. Now, what kind of education? Public Service Announcements, education in the waiting rooms, etc...
- 2) Insurance coverage of patients. I don't know what the data shows but I'm guessing that the 2 states with the highest rates are those that have mandated insurance coverage for everyone. I'll bet Hawaii and Massachusetts have the highest rates.
- 3) Some reasons are cultural taboo, the loss of understanding by patients and physicians about cervical cancer, competing demands (this exam requires time and the provider is not compensated for the extra time spent), and the decrease in the use of estrogens which require a pap smear before the prescription was refilled.