

GLOBAL QUEST TO ERADICATE CERVICAL CANCER:

**A Critical analysis of the role of the OCI FOUNDATION CERVIBREAST APPLICATION for use in
Developing Countries and strengthening measures that should be adopted**

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Most Women in developing countries know little to nothing about cervical cancer. They are completely ignorant of the dangers associated with cervical cancer, and how easy it is to develop this common but yet deadly cancer. Recent studies have shown that only 5% of women in developing countries have been screened for cervical cancer in the past 5 years compared with 40 to 50% of women in developed countries.¹ Cervical cancer is entirely curable and preventable because it slowly progresses from the pre-cancerous stage to the cancerous stage, therefore early diagnosis and treatment increases the survival rate and halts its progression. Unlike developed countries such as USA and Germany where effective screening and treatment programs are easily accessible, treatment or prevention of cervical cancer in developing countries such as those in Africa, is hampered by lack of early screening, inefficient government-funded vaccination and in fact general lack of adequate awareness about cervical cancer. The implication is that this cancer is not detected in its early stages but at the late stage when prognosis is very low. Given the large mortality rate due to cervical cancer, it is important that more women are empowered to take charge of their health and adopt cancer-preventive lifestyle.

This is why the development of the OCI CERVIBREAST mobile APPLICATION in 2019 is a huge step to creating more awareness about cervical cancer. Readily available for download on appstore and playstore, it provides information, videos and personalized reminders on how to minimize the impact of breast and cervical cancer for free. The application caters for both cervical and breast cancer, but for the purpose of this essay, I would be focusing on cervical cancer. After months of analyzing and using the application, I would say that the application has some unique features, unlike any other application that can help with the prevention, and most importantly create extensive awareness about cervical cancer especially in developing countries where access to such information is limited.

The OCI CERVIBREAST mobile APPLICATION Provides information on cervical cancer as well as its preventive measures for free. It gives an in-depth knowledge on the cause of cervical cancer, risk factors, HPV vaccination, early symptoms

and advanced symptoms etc. The application sends a reminder to its users based on their screening history, to go for a cervical cancer screening; every two years, if they have screened for cervical cancer in the past, or every two weeks, if they have never had any cervical cancer screening in the past. This feature is quite commendable as it reminds the user to go for their screening at appropriate times. This is important for people that have very busy schedules. In addition, the location feature in the application ensures that users are able to find cervical cancer screening services within their geographical area. This feature, while very useful, requires some improvements in order to fulfill the needs of its users. I observed that it does not provide users with much screening center options, most importantly it fails to provide useful basic information about these centers such as their working hours, cost of service and a working call number. I tried calling the cervical cancer service centre in Minna but their number was unreachable and later on, was switched off.

Furthermore, the online booking feature of the application which allows people to book their screening appointment by filling an online form is a welcomed development, as it allows people to schedule their screening ahead of time while fitting such times into their schedules. However, it is important that a notification, via email or text, with the confirmed booking information should be sent to the user within twenty four hours of booking the appointment, to enable the user properly integrate any changes in the appointment into their own schedule.

More so, the OCI CERVIBREAST mobile APPLICATION provides online ArOY Training Courses, to ensure that cervical cancer preventive campaign is added to all high school's curriculum. The dynamic modes of delivery for these courses such as, online video- streaming or reading, as well as offline pdf format makes it easy for a wider dissemination of information regarding cervical cancer to adults, Youth Corpers and Monitors.

In as much as the effort made by The OCI FOUNDATION in inventing this mobile application is to be commended, it is no doubt that there are still many areas of improvement for this application to achieve its goal in developing countries like those of Africa. Considering the unique challenges of developing countries in education, technological infrastructures such as internet, access to medical services e.t.c, the following measures have been carefully curated to help strengthen the usage as well as effectiveness of the application in developing countries. These measures are geared towards achieving wider coverage for the application in terms of usage, diversifying access to the application features as a result of technological constraints, improving on current features while integrating necessary but non-existent features in the application.

In order to improve the application reach, it is important to diversify the languages available on the application to include local language options so that people who cannot speak English can as well use the application. This will increase the application reach not just among English speaking groups but also non English speakers.

In addition, for extended reach especially to people at the grass roots, it is important to create more awareness about this application through online webinars, social media adverts, workshops and seminars. For effective social media reach and engagement, the foundation should target small social media influencers with a decent following on instagram, twitter, facebook etc. This group of influencers will be more effective in getting the desired result as they have loyal followers, and charge less thereby, making them a cost effective option.

Furthermore, more cervical cancer screening centers should be included so that people can easily find screening centers in their area. Information of these service centers, such as phone numbers and email addresses should be updated regularly, to ensure that it is always available for inquiries from people looking to book an appointment or request for other services. There should be provision of vaccination centers as well as location on the app for each state, country, or region hence making it easier for people to locate vaccination centers and get vaccinated at the earliest possible time.

In furtherance, given the infrastructural constraints in developing countries such as lack of access to proper internet connection especially in rural areas among many others, it is important to develop other means to make some important features of the application accessible to individuals without a smart phone or access to the internet. A USSD CODE could be made available such that anyone with a SIM enabled device can easily dial and access vital services of the OCI CERVIBREAST APPLICATION such as: booking a digital cervical screening, location of service centers in your vicinity, online or offline.

In conclusion, the OCI CERVIBREAST mobile APPLICATION is a unique application that will help with most of the challenges encountered in developing countries with respect to cervical cancer awareness, prevention and treatment.

REFERENCES

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