

Population Screening Act: a stop-smoking strategy as part of the national cervical cancer screening programme

No. 2018/17, The Hague, July 25, 2018

Executive summary

Health Council of the Netherlands



The department of General Practice of the Academic Medical Center (AMC) in Amsterdam intends to examine the effect of a smoking cessation intervention as part of the national cervical cancer screening programme. As this study would be part of an existing population screening programme, the State Secretary of Health, Welfare, and Sport (VWS) has decided that it would require a permit under the Dutch Population Screening Act (WBO). The Committee on Population Screening of the Health Council advises the State Secretary for Health, Welfare and Sport to grant a permit under a few conditions.

Permit application

In the proposed study (SUCCESS study), women who participate in the national cervical cancer screening programme will be given a questionnaire to fill out. In the intervention group, women who smoke will be offered a stop-smoking strategy (advice and support). After six months, the extent to which these women have actually made an attempt to stop smoking will be

evaluated, in comparison to the control group. A process evaluation is part of the study. This evaluation also looks at the effect of the offer of the stop-smoking strategy on the motivation of women to continue their participation in the national cervical cancer screening programme.

Review against WBO requirements

Risk-benefit balance

According to the Committee the benefit of the study outweighs the risk. The study can result in fewer women smoking. In addition, the study provides information about the effectiveness of offering an intervention within the framework of an existing population screening study. The impact on the participants is limited, and the study does not involve any risks.

Laws governing medical practice

For the Committee the information provided to the participants requires improvement on several points in order to comply with the laws governing the practice of medicine.

Public health interest

The Committee finds it reasonable that the proposed study will not have any negative impact on the existing national cervical cancer screening programme. The process evaluation will make it clear whether this is indeed the case.

Advice

The Committee advises the State Secretary to grant the permit subject to the following conditions:

- The question of continuation of their participation in the national cervical cancer screening programme will be asked to all women in the programme.
- The information provided will be modified. This includes adding information about the cotinine test and the costs of participating in a stop-smoking programme. In addition, the study will be presented as a lifestyle study instead of health. Finally, all the participants will be informed about the study after its completion.



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Preferred citation:

Health Council of the Netherlands. Population Screening Act: a stop-smoking strategy as part of the national cervical cancer screening programme. The Hague: Health Council of the Netherlands, 2018; publication no. 2018/17.

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