

## Editor's foreword

Esteemed readers,

It is a great pleasure to put forth yet another issue of the Serbian Journal of Public Health, with a focus on reproductive health this time around. This July the Institute of Public Health of Serbia “Dr Milan Jovanović Batut” under the patronage of the Ministry of Health, and with the support of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), prepared the “Promotion of reproductive health — primary and secondary prevention of cervical carcinoma” hybrid seminar.

Designed in a way to encourage the exchange of experience and good practice that would in turn improve overall knowledge in primary and secondary prevention of cervical carcinoma and help implement screening program models from other countries (the Netherlands, Croatia, Slovenia), the current topics helped gather over 200 participants, both from the obstetric-gynaecological and the public health fields, from eminent respective institutions from across the country.

The dedication and support of the UNFPA on this important subject was demonstrated in many ways, as well as through the participation of John Kennedy Mosoti in person, the acting director of the UNFPA in Serbia, in the symposium. A grand contribution was also provided by the World Health Organization regional director for the Western Balkans, Fabio Scano. Professor Aleksandar Stefanović, MD, the director of the Clinic for gynecology and obstetrics of the Clinical Centre of Serbia, the president of the regional Association of Gynecologists and Obstetricians of Serbia, Montenegro and Republic of Srpska, contributed immensely with the lecture on challenges in prevention and early diagnosis of cervical carcinoma. The symposium was also endorsed by associate professor Predrag Sazdanović, MD, state secretary in the Ministry of Health, Jelena Janković, MD, assistant minister for public health and program protection, as well as Philip Davies, MD, consultant on cervical cancer prevention in UNFPA, who showcased the current global circumstance and highlighted the recommendations on HPV infection prevention for Serbia.

As the great medical educator Milan Jovanović Batut used to say, medicine is both a science and a skill facing a double challenge — to maintain health in the healthy and to further improve it, and when it shall fail in that, to treat sickness — that we, as his followers, continue to face today, through devoted, conscientious work, through every day engagement, dedicated to ameliorating reproductive health through both primary and secondary prevention.

Knowledge is our main adversary in the battle against cervical cancer, given that it is fundamentally a malignant disease preventable by regular checkups. It is well known that in 99,7% the underlying cause of cervical cancer is the Human Papilloma Virus (HPV). Cervical cancer is ranked fourth among the globally most prevalent malignant diseases, constituting about 6,6% of the total cancer burden in women. According to data from the Cancer Registry of the Republic of Serbia from 2020, there is an annual number of 1087 newly diagnosed cases and 453 deaths due to cervical cancer in Serbia. These epidemiological data impose on us that through the challenge of primary and secondary prevention we are obligated to fight for the maintenance and improve-

ment of the health of our nation, because cervical cancer can be precluded.

Educational healthcare measures aimed both at the entire population and the high-risk individuals are of paramount importance for said health maintenance and improvement on a population-wide level. Primary prevention is carried out through the implementation of general measures and HPV immunisation, to minimize the overall number of HPV infections. Secondary prevention centres around cervical cancer screening with early premalignant lesion and timely cancer detection and treatment as the objective.

As professor Aleksandar Stefanović concluded in his lecture, the proper combination of HPV immunisation and organized screening stand to significantly reduce the incidence and mortality of cervical cancer. In this regard the present year 2022 proves its significance in the fact recommended HPV immunisation has been made available in the paediatric population aged 9 to 19 in the Republic of Serbia. Serbia has thereafter become part of the group of countries that recognize the importance of this form of prevention.

To aspire to decrease the incidence and mortality rates of cervical cancer, to eliminate cervical cancer as a whole, is among the most pressing goals of healthcare in the Republic of Serbia. It is our immense pleasure that the “Promotion of reproductive health — primary and secondary prevention of cervical carcinoma” seminar gathered as many representatives of primary health centres and institutes for public health, institutes for students’ healthcare in Belgrade and Niš, and clinical-hospital and clinical centres from across the country.

We hope that the experience of the lecturers from within our country and from without, as examples of both good clinical practice and new findings, that were introduced to the participants of the symposium, now made available in written form in this issue of the Serbian Journal of Public Health, will lend themselves to future contributions by all of us in the field of prevention and early detection of cervical cancer and the amelioration of reproductive health.

Editor-in-chief of the *Serbian Journal of Public Health*

**Asst. Prof. Verica Jovanović, MD PhD**