

18.12.2028
2028

New cervical cancer test 'will revolutionise' screening

A NEW cervical cancer test has been found to outperform current UK screening at a reduced cost, according to a study.

The epigenetics-based test detected 100 per cent of the cancers that developed in 15,744 women in a trial led by Queen Mary University of London.

It performed "significantly better" than the Pap smear or the human papil-

lomavirus (HPV) test, and the study's authors believe it would be cheaper.

The Pap smear detected one quarter and the HPV test detected half of the cancers in the group of women aged 25-65 in Canada.

Lead researcher Professor Attila Lorincz, who helped develop the world's first test for HPV in 1988, called it an "enormous development". Cervi-

cal cancer screening is usually done through the Pap smear, which can only detect around 50 per cent of pre-cancerous cells in the cervix.

The HPV test, which looks for the presence of cancer-causing HPV DNA, is more accurate, but does not identify women's risks of developing cancer.

Instead of checking for patterns in the DNA code, the new test examines

chemical markers that sit on top of the DNA, forming its "epigenetic profile".

Prof Lorincz added: "This really is a huge advance in how to deal with HPV-infected women and men, numbering in the billions worldwide, and it is going to revolutionise screening.

"We were surprised by how well this new test can detect and predict early cervical cancers years in advance, with

100 per cent detected, including adenocarcinomas, a type of cervical cancer that is very difficult to detect. The test is much better than anything in the UK at present but could take at least five years to be established."

The study was funded by the Canadian Institutes for Health Research and Cancer Research UK and published in the *International Journal of Cancer*.