

# RAISE

AWARENESS • EDUCATION • FUNDS • SURVIVORS

FALL • 2018

## FROM AN EXPERT

### Understanding pelvic exams



Kellie S. Rath, MD

*Kellie S. Rath, MD, is a gynecologic oncologist who specializes in management and treatment of cancers of the vulva, cervix, endometrium, uterus and ovaries. She practices at **OhioHealth Riverside Methodist Hospital in Columbus.***

The annual trek to the gynecologist (or primary care physician who does gynecologic exams) is not something that most women enjoy. I remember dreading my first visit as a teenager. I didn't know what to expect or why seeing my gynecologist might be important. Years later after medical school, residency, fellowship, and a few years of practice I realized that my anxiety and confusion were normal, and that many women never develop a good understanding of what their

doctor is really doing during their pelvic exam.

To help understand the difference it is important to know:

1. A pelvic exam is not the same as a Pap test (Pap smear).
2. Pap tests are not done at every pelvic exam, but when done it is during a pelvic exam.
3. Pelvic exams are often performed before the age of 21.
4. Twenty-one is the age experts recommend a woman have their first Pap test unless the provider has concerns during a pelvic exam at an earlier age.

Now to answer some of the questions my colleagues and I hear on a weekly basis.

#### What is your provider doing during the pelvic exam?

1. Examining external genitalia: your doctor is looking at the external skin (vulva) to make sure there are no abnormal growths or changes in the skin.
2. Inserting the speculum to look at the vagina and cervix. Here they check for any discharge, abnormal growths, or changes in the skin. They may collect a sample if they see something abnormal.
3. They may collect a Pap test at this time – a Pap test collects cells from the cervix which are sent to pathologists who will look for abnormal cells that might be associated with pre-cancer or cancer of the cervix. They may also send this to test for the HPV virus.
4. Next, they will do a bimanual exam – inserting one or two fingers into the vagina to feel the vaginal wall, cervix, uterus, and ovaries. Here they look for any masses or tenderness with the exam.

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Notes from TCC Founder and Cancer survivor, Diane Crawford

## FOCUSED

Our focus continues to be on raising awareness of cervical cancer prevention. Unlike other diseases, we do not need a CURE, we need EDUCATION. Educating parents, young adults and caregivers about prevention is the key to ending cervical cancer. Our student intern, Morgan Parslow, raised her voice and shared her passion for protecting the youth by introducing The Crawford Crew to her fellow classmates. You will be inspired by her as you read **What's Happening with TCC.**

Speaking of inspiring people, in this issue we introduce you to Dr. Kellie Rath and Dr. Christina Kulesa. They are working moms and leaders in their professions and they have made time to play important roles as educators, donors, and friends to TCC.

My FOCUSED column would not be complete without mentioning January. January is our most impactful month of the year when we **Paint the Ville Teal** and **Raise A Racket** for Cervical Cancer Awareness. Our board members and volunteers work year-round to plan these events. New for **Raise A Racket 2019** – 2 tennis venues, pickleball, mobile bidding and a more sophisticated registration experience. **Register today!** And bring the entire family as we **Paint the Ville Teal!**

**We wish you and your loved ones a healthy and happy holiday season!**



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THE CRAWFORD  
CREW

Pulling together to prevent cervical cancer



## THINGS TO PLAN ON

- **Ladies Night Out @ ACE Hardware Westerville:** Wednesday, December 5th from 4-8pm help make Christmas bright for others! Enjoy hands on demos, food, door prizes and a gift if you are one of the first 400 ladies to attend. Bring a non-perishable food item for WARM and receive a \$5 ACE coupon. TCC will benefit from sales of Crew Gear and raffle tickets.
- **2nd Annual Paint the 'Ville Teal:** Join us Saturday, January 5th as we Paint the 'Ville Teal, tying ribbons throughout Westerville for National Cervical Cancer Awareness month. If you're interested in helping us tie trees and signs with ribbons on Jan 5th, please contact us. We're also seeking sponsors to cover the costs of the ribbons.
- **7th Annual Raise A Racket** is Saturday, January 19, 2019! Register before December 17th and receive this FREE 20oz Stainless Steel Insulated Tumbler sponsored by Northstar Family Dental!



## TCC SPOTLIGHT DR. CHRISTINA KULESA

OWNER, NORTHSTAR FAMILY DENTAL / BUSINESS SPONSOR & MEDICAL EXPERT FOR TCC



### *How and when did you become involved with The Crawford Crew?*

I was introduced to Diane through mutual friends at Medallion Country Club due to our love of tennis. Diane's passion for The Crawford Crew was evident in every interaction we had, and I was eager to get involved!

### *Tell us about what you specifically do to support TCC?*

We are proud annual sponsors of The Crawford Crew's *Raise a Racket* and *Save Our Sisters 5k* events. Beyond monetary sponsorship and event participation, I have had the pleasure of speaking at seminars and in informational videos in regard to the relationship between dentistry and HPV to help create awareness and educate the public on prevention.

### *How is TCC and RAR different than other volunteer or charitable organizations?*

TCC holds a special place in our hearts as a female focused organization. As an all-female team, we are particularly inspired by causes that contribute to and advocate on behalf of female health and wellness. Diane's story and her selfless dedication to preventing cervical cancer and supporting those families who are battling the disease is a huge motivation for our support of the organization. And there is a correlation between HPV and dentistry. HPV-positive oropharyngeal cancer has surpassed cervical cancer as the most prevalent HPV cancer. In fact, certain strains of HPV cause 70% of oropharyngeal cancers in the US. As oral health professionals, we play a critical role in combating growing rates of HPV-positive oropharyngeal cancers. We strongly and clearly recommend HPV vaccination to all age-eligible patients and educate patients and parents about the link between HPV and oropharyngeal cancers. TCC has given us a vehicle to spread this knowledge even beyond our own patient base. It's hard not to support such a worthy cause that could easily affect someone close to us.

### *How can someone help support TCC and/or RAR?*

Prevention is key and education and awareness are powerful. Please help Diane, The Crawford Crew team and local health care professionals spread the word about the educational resources that TCC is working hard to provide. **Sponsorship** of one of the many great events that TCC hosts each year will help the organization grow, support further research and awareness and help families who are currently battling HPV related cancers.



# WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH TCC



Our fall intern, Morgan Parslow, represented The Crawford Crew at her university's Health Fest on October 16th. Students stopped by to learn how to prevent cervical cancer, sign up to volunteer,

get TCC merchandise and vote for The Crawford Crew during the **Aetna Voices of Health Campaign**.

Morgan is a senior at **Slippery Rock University** in Pennsylvania, majoring in Public Health. She chose this educational path to help

educate the public and give back to her community. Her passion for women's health and understanding of the importance of education made her a great fit for **The Crawford Crew's Internship Program**. "I have learned so much about how a small nonprofit is run, as well as tons of valuable information about Cervical Cancer and HPV," said Morgan when asked about her takeaways from the internship.

Our **internship program** helps to further the mission of The Crawford Crew by assisting with fundraising, development, public health education and administrative activities. The intern acts as the assistant to the Executive Director and supports board members and volunteers as needed. To learn more about our internship program or to apply, **click here!**

## SHOP THE CRAWFORD CREW!

Shop with The Crawford Crew to find unique gifts for everyone on your list! Stores include **BeGirl Clothing**, **Hearts of Hope** jewelry and **Crew Gear**. And don't forget to use **AmazonSmile** for all of your holiday Amazon purchases! When you shop with these partners, a donation is made to TCC with every purchase.

## KNOW THE FACTS



**EACH DAY**  
in the United States,

**33** WOMEN  
are diagnosed  
with HPV-related  
**CERVICAL CANCER.**

### FDA Approves Expanded Use of Gardasil 9

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration today approved a supplemental application for Gardasil 9 (Human Papillomavirus (HPV) 9-valent Vaccine, Recombinant) expanding the approved use of the vaccine to include **women and men aged 27 through 45 years**. Gardasil 9 prevents certain cancers and diseases caused by the **nine HPV types covered by the vaccine**.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has stated that HPV vaccination prior to becoming infected with the HPV types covered by the vaccine has the **potential to prevent more than 90 percent of these cancers**, or 31,200 cases every year, from ever developing.

According to the CDC, every year about 14 million Americans become infected with HPV; about 12,000 women are diagnosed with and about 4,000 women die from cervical cancer caused by certain HPV viruses.

**Reference:** <https://www.fda.gov/NewsEvents/Newsroom/PressAnnouncements/ucm622715.htm>



5. Sometimes your doctor may do a rectal exam or rectovaginal exam. This lets your doctor get a better exam of the area behind the uterus or deep in the pelvis.

**What should you talk to your provider about before the pelvic exam?**

1. Let your provider know if you have any new symptoms this might include:
  - Irregular periods (heavy bleeding, bleeding between cycles)
  - Painful periods
  - Pain with intercourse
  - Bleeding after intercourse
  - Any bleeding or dark colored discharge after menopause
  - Abdominal or pelvic pain or feeling bloated
  - Pain with urination or leaking urine
  - Itching, burning, or mass of the external skin (vulva)
2. Let your provider know if you have concerns about the pelvic exam:
  - If you had a previous bad experience with a pelvic exam
  - If exams are painful for you or cause a lot of anxiety

**How often do you need a pelvic exam?**

This question is a bit more difficult to answer. In the last few years guidelines for how often we should screen for cervical pre-cancer or cancer (with a Pap test or HPV test) have changed. There are also new recommendations about if yearly pelvic exams for asymptomatic women are needed. The bottom line is you should discuss this with your provider.

**How often do I need a Pap test?**

Before answering the very popular question of how often, you should know that Pap tests are used to screen for cancerous changes on the cervix.

First, remember that if you have a pelvic exam in the emergency department or another urgent care setting you most likely did NOT get a Pap test. Ask the provider who is doing your exam if they are sending a Pap test so that you know! Your first Pap test should be at age 21.

- If your Pap is normal, then you should have testing every 3 years.
- Once you are >30 you can consider screening every 5 years if your Pap is normal and HPV test is negative.
- Some providers are starting to recommend screening for cervical cancer by testing for high risk HPV since persistent high-risk HPV infection leads to pre-cancer and cancer of the cervix.
- These guidelines can be confusing, so ask your doctor what they recommend for you!

If you aren't due for a Pap you should still see your gynecologist or primary care provider each year. They may recommend a pelvic exam each year – or may not depending on if you have any problems. During your appointment, you should discuss your gynecologic health, including:

- Your menstrual cycle
- Any bleeding you experience outside a normal period
  - After intercourse
  - Post-menopausal
- Difficulty with urination (pain, feeling like you need to go all the time, or leakage)
- Pain or difficulty with intercourse
- New vulvar symptoms (pain, itching, mass)
- New abdominal pain, pelvic pain, or bloating.

I hope you have a better understanding now of the difference between a pelvic exam and a Pap test, why both may be needed and what your provider is doing during each. As with everything there are always exceptions, and you should discuss all concerns with your provider.



**RAISE YOUR VOICE**

Donate and make a difference where you feel most passionate!

OUTREACH/EDUCATION

RESEARCH



SUBSCRIBE!

**OUR GOAL IS TO RAISE MONEY AND POUR IT INTO EDUCATION, RESEARCH AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH PROGRAMS FOR CERVICAL CANCER AND OTHER GYNECOLOGICAL CANCERS.**

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