

Foreword

The International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) is pleased to publish these Technical Working Group recommendations on best practices in various aspects of a cervical screening programme. Cervical cancer is a significant public health challenge globally, and cervical screening programmes play a crucial role in the prevention and early detection of this disease. The development of best practices for cervical screening programmes is critical to ensure that these programmes are effective, efficient, and safe for all participants.

This document emphasizes the importance of conducting regular audits of cervical cancers to ensure the quality of screening programmes. It also highlights the critical role of ethical and legal frameworks in obtaining consent, conducting cancer audits, and communicating the audit outcomes to patients and health-care workers.

Effective communication to all women is another crucial element of cervical screening programmes. This document provides recommendations to ensure that communication is

transparent, understandable, and culturally appropriate. It also recognizes the need to build workforce competencies in communication to ensure that all women receive the information and support they need to make informed decisions about their health.

The development of these recommendations was prompted by events in Ireland after an audit of interval cancers in the cervical screening programme in 2018. This document contains the outcomes of the deliberations of three Technical Working Groups of global experts. The IARC Secretariat conducted a review of the work undertaken by professional bodies and government agencies in several countries, including Ireland. The members of the Technical Working Groups thoroughly examined the evidence and consulted with all relevant stakeholders to develop practical and actionable recommendations. I would like to extend my gratitude to Dr Anne Mackie, Dr Peter Sasieni, and Dr Marc Arbyn for leading their respective Technical Working Groups and providing excellent guidance to colleagues at IARC. This document is

a testament to the value of collaboration between researchers, practitioners, policy-makers, and cancer advocates in advancing cancer prevention and control efforts.

Despite the variation between countries in screening programme organization, legal practice, and communication strategies, I hope that this document will serve as a guide for existing and planned cervical screening programmes as they evolve. The members of the Technical Working Groups acknowledge that the recommendations provided in this document are not definitive, given the paucity of high-level evidence in this area. However, I believe that this document will provide a valuable resource for practitioners and researchers working in cervical screening programmes and will help to ensure that these programmes operate in a safe and effective manner.

Dr Elisabete Weiderpass
Director, International Agency
for Research on Cancer