



Dr. Anne Szarewski

Anne Marie Szarewski was a physician and medical researcher who made major contributions to the health of women. She was well known to and much loved by many in the world of HPV research. She made great contributions to the field of prevention of HPV associated diseases. Tragically, she died suddenly and unexpectedly on the 24th of August 2013, just a 8 days before her 54th birthday. She is survived by her husband Lester Venter whom she married in 2003. Anne learnt colposcopy from Albert Singer and epidemiology from Jack Cuzick, with whom she continued to work until her death. In 1995, they published the first study of HPV testing in cervical screening and showed that testing for the presence of HPV DNA would pick up cases of high-grade CIN that were missed by cytology testing. This early trial was followed by a larger multi-centre trial using hybrid capture II. The HART study, published in 2003, concluded that “HPV testing could be used for primary screening in women older than 30 years, with cytology used to triage HPV-positive women. HPV-positive women with normal or borderline cytology (about 6% of screened women) could be managed by repeat testing after 12 months”.

More recently Anne was perhaps best known for the Predictors Studies in which a number of commercially available HPV tests and two collection mediums were compared on the same clinical samples. Initially she studied HPV testing in a triage setting and more recently in a primary screening setting.

Anne was also one of the first to study the possibility of HPV testing on self-collected vaginal samples- an approach that is finding increasing attention as a way to increase screening uptake both in developed countries for women who find clinician sampling embarrassing, uncomfortable or simply inconvenient, and in low-resource settings. Anne was a principal investigator and author on key clinical trials studying the bivalent HPV vaccine. She was a strong supporter of HPV vaccination and one of the first to call for older women and boys to be vaccinated too. Anne was something of an enigma. She professed to have no understanding of statistics but chose to work in analytic epidemiology. She thought that most mathematicians were on the autistic end of the spectrum, but spent much of her career working closely with them and enjoying their company. On social issues such as contraception, feminism and gay rights, Anne was a liberal, but in other respects she was extremely conservative. She believed that certain standards should be maintained – always being immaculately dressed, which was often at odds with the tendency of academics to wear casual and sometimes scruffy clothes. To her immediate colleagues, Anne was the cake lady. Every day at 3.00pm she would produce cakes and wander into people’s offices to offer a little cake ‘pick me up’ and entertaining conversation. Her lively, upbeat personality and conscientious attention to detail and women’s needs in the increasingly bureaucratic field of medical research will be greatly missed.