

## **Pap Test : The Life Saver**

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George Papanikolaou, also known as dr. Pap, is one of the greatest researchers of medical science of the 20 th century. He is the doctor who saved millions of women around the globe from cervical cancer.

“I only live to serve life” confessed George Papanikolaou at an early age. A statement that characterized the man himself and his research which, 50 years after his death, still continues to serve life today.

But then again, only death could stop dr . Pap’s unbelievable diligence and legendary insistence on his research. During his lifetime he changed the medical notions regarding the prevention and early diagnosis of cancer and created the lifesaving test that was named after him, the famous pap test.

Up until his invention of the pap test the cervical cancer of the uterus was the leading cause of death among women worldwide. The diagnosis was difficult and possible only in women with advanced stages of cancer who had related symptoms, such as frequent metrorrhagias (uterus bleeding) which they considered to be an irregularity of menstruation and therefore disregarded it. The diagnosis also included surgical incision and biopsy.

George Papanikolaou while studying the cervical cells under his microscope was able to detect atypical lesions which he identified as cancer cells in their early stages. He did that without surgical intervention and even before a cancerous tumor would develop.

Thus, the pap test was born, the most successful cancer screening method in history. A medical examination that can detect lesions of the cervical cells of the uterus in order to diagnose the cervical cancer at the very early and treatable stages.

The pap test was easy to take, painless, bloodless, of low cost and with no complications and it was quickly embraced by doctors and women worldwide. This led to the drastic decline of fatality of women with cervical cancer due to the fact that cancer could now be diagnosed at its very early stages, when the woman hasn’t had any symptoms yet, therefore making the therapy 100 % successful.

The value of the pap test for the health of the women can be amply measured by the statistical facts that show that within the last 60 years since its implementation, the cervical cancer of the uterus has dropped from being the #1 cause of death in women to #13!

Today pap test is a routine medical examination for women that can detect not only the cervical cancer of the uterus but also vaginal infections, some sexually transmitted diseases and lesions related to the Human Papilloma Virus or commonly known as HPV, a virus that tends to become almost epidemic affecting 40% to 50% of the female population.

The last few years an HPV vaccine has been developed and distributed to women of young age. Even though the immunization does not protect one from all the types of HPV as there are more than 300 types, it still is a message of hope for the future elimination of cervical cancer. Studies have shown that a combination of HPV immunization and annual screening with pap test can reduce the occurrence of cervical cancer of the uterus by 94%.

The lives of women all around the world who have been saved thanks to the pap test in the last 60 years can be counted in the millions. Despite the progress made in medical science the pap test remains undisputably the only instrument of preventive diagnosis of the cervical cancer of the uterus.

George Papanikolaou was, is and will continue to be a benefactor and saviour of the women in the world.