

Magaret: “My daughters saw their sister die of cervical cancer and are still scared”

“My eldest daughter died of cervical cancer and we found out too late because she didn’t tell us.

In February 2016, I heard about the screenings from the nurses at Chimombe rural hospital. Even though I’ve been divorced for eight years and had no symptoms, I decided to have the screening, because they explained I was still at risk.

On the day of the hospital appointment, I walked for two hours to get there. After the screening, I learned that I had lesions on my cervix. The medical staff asked if they could perform cryotherapy straight away, which treats lesions with the freezing method.

At first, it was difficult to accept, because I thought I had cancer, but the nurses reassured and counselled me.

The cryotherapy was a little bit uncomfortable, but I was determined to have it done. After the treatment, I walked for two hours to get home. I wasn’t in pain or sick from the procedure.

In August 2016, I came back for a follow-up appointment to see if the cryotherapy was successful. They told me I had no lesions anymore. I also had an HIV test, which came back negative, so I don’t have to come back for my next screening for another three years.

I’ve tried convincing my two daughters to have the screening, but they saw their sister die of cervical cancer and are still too scared. They say, ‘I’d rather die undiagnosed than screen for cancer.’

But I was happy to learn I had these lesions, because it was an opportunity for me to get treatment and be cured.”

Magaret, aged 58, Gutu, Zimbabwe, March 2017



Magaret and MSF nurse mentor Sister Tendai Chigura in Magaret’s home in Gutu, Zimbabwe, June 2016 © Mélanie Wenger