BACKGROUND
The State of Qatar experiences a mean cervical cancer (CxCa) burden of 15 cases annually. Given opportunistic Pap testing predominantly secondary to suspicious symptomatology, the majority of women presenting with CxCa harbor advanced-stage disease at diagnosis (Figure 1). The crude incidence rate for CxCa in Qatar is 3.2/100,000; with a bimodal pattern of incidence based on 2 dominant age-groups: 40-44, and 60-64 years (Figure 2). As Sidra Medicine is a new, premier Women’s and Children’s hospital in Doha, State of Qatar, the Cytology service sought to assess the proportion and age of women deemed at increased-risk for developing CxCa by never having a Pap test as revealed through a needs-assessment survey. The effort aimed to guide targeted health literacy, promotion initiatives. Salient findings from 117 female respondents are discussed.

METHODS
A 31-question needs-assessment survey was distributed to volunteering participants (women and men) anonymously. Questions aimed to capture demographic data (eg. gender, age-group), also data regarding health literacy of CxCa (eg. Pap testing, preceding timeframe of Pap testing) among other aspects of cervical cancer management.

RESULTS
From 203 surveys, 117 were from women (57.6%). The dominant female age groups were 30-39 years (48/117: 41%) and 20-29 years (33/117: 28.2%) respectively. From 117 female respondents, 57 (48.7%) reported never having a Pap test, compared to 52 (44.4%) that had, mainly within 1-3 preceding years. From the 203 surveys, 75 women and men (36.9%) reported not being aware of the cytologic method.

CONCLUSIONS
Preliminary data arising from the Sidra IRB-approved needs-assessment survey revealed a significant population of women 48/117 (41%) aged 30-39 years that never had a Pap test; and 36.9% of respondents being unaware of the cytologic method. By not having a preceding Pap test, these women are deemed to be at increased-risk for developing CxCa relative to women that have had a Pap test. Based on epidemiological data characteristic of Qatar, as published by the Qatar Ministry of Public Health, these women may represent a clinically high-risk group harboring asymptomatic but progressive cervical neoplasia that may likely present clinically when this cohort reaches the 40-44 years of age group, representing the first peak of cervical cancer incidence in the State of Qatar. Health literacy and promotion efforts initiated at Sidra Medicine aim to target this specific age-group of women to raise awareness of disease risk.

REFERENCES