Biosensors in Cervical Cancer

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Doi: https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20668358
Received: 03 May 2026
Accepted: 16 May 2026

Abstract

Cervical cancer is a significant health concern for women worldwide. More than 600,000 women are diagnosed annually with cervical cancer, and approximately 340,000 of those women die from it each year. The leading cause of cervical cancer is called HPV, particularly high-risk HPV strains (e.g. HPV 16 and 18). The virus can enter your body and slowly alter your normal cells into cancer cells by producing the harmful proteins E6 and E7. Although vaccinations (i.e. Gardasil) are effective in protecting young girls from developing cervical cancer, adult women must continue to get regular screening for cervical cancer. The older methods used for screening women for cervical cancer (i.e. Pap smear) are only able to detect between 50% to 70% of all cervical abnormalities, and they rely upon laboratory technicians who have the expertise to read the sample. PCR tests can accurately identify approximately 95% of cervical cancer cases; however, these tests take 1 to 3 days to process, cost $40 per test, must be performed in a specialized laboratory, and require cold storage (i.e. refrigeration) until they are used – making them unsuitable for many villages and small health care clinics.Biosensors are the promise for the future of cervical cancer detection. Biosensors are small, easy to use test devices similar to blood sugar testing strips. They consist of a “catcher,” like an antibody or DNA fragment, which is used to capture the presence of HPV from a single swab taken from a woman’s neck. The results of the test are then visualized using either a light signal, color change or weight change – within 10 minutes, for $5. Electrically-activated biosensors are the least expensive and easiest to manufacture using printed testing strips with ultra-sensitive gold nanoparticles combined with either electrical or optical detection; therefore biosensors will produce an accuracy rate matching that of PCR tests but can be performed in any location, resulting in a 40% reduction in cervical cancer mortality rates in impoverished regions such as Pune. Here we will discuss biosensor construction and their advantages.(2)(11)(13)

Introduction

The cervix is the neck of the womb. Cancer begins in the wrong growth of cells. Worldwide, there are 600,000 new cases each year. 340,000 die. India has 123,000. This is 18% of the world. Poor villages in low-money countries suffer most. 85% die. No early detection, hence late detection, hence hard to treat.

Cause: Human Papovavirus. Spreads by close contact, like sex. 200 types of the virus. High-risk types 16/18 cause 70% of cancers. DNA of the virus enters the cells. Makes E6/E7. E6 kills the p53 guard. E7 removes the Rb brake. Cells go wild. Leads to CIN1 (slight change), CIN2 (medium change), CIN3 (pre-cancer), and finally cancer. No pain, sneaky!

Good news: Vaccines!

Gardasil 9: protects against 9 bad viruses.90% protection if given before first touch.

But only 20% girls in India get it.Need tests every 3 years from age 30: WHO.

Pune ladies walk miles for a check-up: not fair.Old tests were bad.Pap smear: doctor scrapes off cells with a stick.Put on a glass slide.Stain with pink or blue.Expert looks under a microscope for weird shapes.Misses 30 to 50% early.Maybe the sampler was bad or the expert was tired.Needs a city lab and a week to wait.Cost:

$15.Colposcopy: If the Pap smear was bad,Put vinegar on the neck.White bad places show up on the scope.Biopsy: Cut a little piece off.Hurt, bleed, infection risk.Machine costs $10,000: no village can afford it.PCR Gold: the best.Finds HPV virus pieces.Knows what kind: 16 or 18.95% accurate.But: Machine costs $100,000 Expert needs 6 months to learn to run it.Sample must be sent in a cold box.2-day wait.$40 per test: no village can afford it.

Enter Biosensors!

Small smart strips: like your diabetes machine.

2 parts:

1)Bioreceptor Catcher:

Antibody protein gives HPV a big hug like a mom hugging her baby.

Or: Aptamer: a string that wraps around the HPV code.

DNA probe: a perfect match!

1) Transducer Reader:

Electric:Electric most (70%). Print carbon ink strip $0.50. Coat gold nanoparticles (small balls increase signal 100 times). Add graphene sheet (flat and super sticky). Glue catcher with chemistry link. Block additional places with milk protein. Swab neck juice drop. HPV sticks in 5 minutes. Zap with -0.5V voltage. Current goes down; line on phone says “HPV 16 yes, risk high.” Finds 1 virus copy in spit cup. LOD very low 1 fg/ ml.

Light type (20%): Shine laser light on gold dots. HPV sticks; color changes from red to blue. Phone camera reads application. No wires needed. Glow type: Virus blocks light glow; dark means bad. Weight type QCM: Crystal buzzes. Weight of virus slows crystal. Like a scale for ants.

Boosters: Nano magic. Spark electric with gold balls 20nm. Carbon tubes carry electricity. MoS2 sheets perfectly extinguish light. Paper: Cheap; print wax walls for flow.

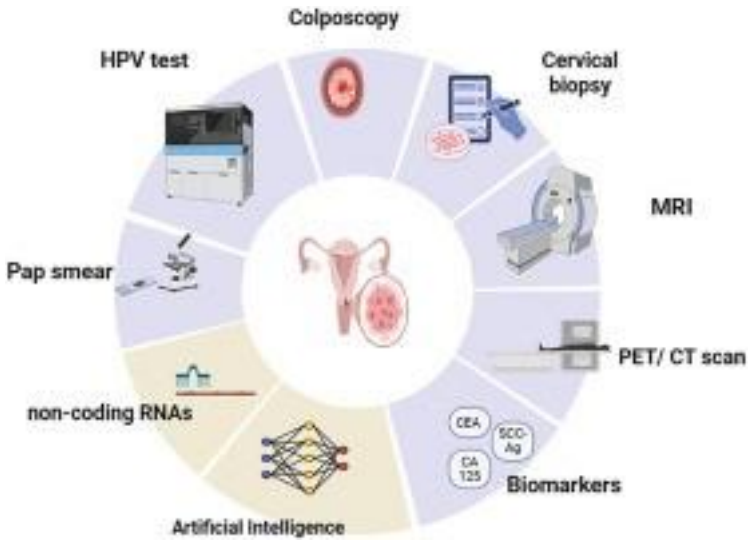

Figure 1: Cervical Cancer Diagnostics

History: Simple. First: Sugar sensor in 1960. Try cancer in 2000. Now: 2026; phone link ready. India: Good; trials in Pune; 90% match PCR.(1)(12)(6)(8)

Methdology:-The present study focuses on the development of a biosensor for the early detection of cervical cancer by targeting specific biomarkers associated with Human Papillomavirus (HPV). Since high-risk HPV

strains such as HPV-16 and HPV-18 are responsible for the majority of cervical cancer cases, the biosensor is designed to detect the DNA sequences related to these viral strains. The methodology includes electrode preparation, probe immobilization, sample processing, detection of target DNA, and analysis of the obtained signals.

The first step involves the preparation of the sensing platform. A conductive electrode such as a glassy carbon electrode or a screen-printed carbon electrode is used as the base of the biosensor. The electrode surface is thoroughly cleaned to remove impurities and ensure proper attachment of sensing materials. After cleaning, the surface is modified using nanomaterials such as gold nanoparticles or graphene derivatives. These nanomaterials are selected because they provide a large surface area, enhance electrical conductivity, and improve the sensitivity of the biosensor.

Following electrode modification, a single-stranded DNA probe that is complementary to the target HPV DNA sequence is immobilized on the surface of the electrode. The probe acts as a recognition element that specifically binds to the target DNA if it is present in the sample. Chemical bonding methods such as thiol-gold interaction or other coupling techniques are used to ensure stable attachment of the DNA probe to the nanomaterial-modified surface.

Once the probe is immobilized, biological samples are prepared for analysis. Cervical swab samples or extracted DNA samples are processed using standard extraction methods to isolate genetic material. The extracted DNA is then diluted in a suitable buffer solution such as phosphate-buffered saline to maintain a stable pH environment for the hybridization process.

During the detection step, the prepared sample is introduced onto the biosensor surface. If the target HPV DNA is present, it will hybridize with the immobilized probe DNA on the electrode. This hybridization event leads to changes in the electrical properties at the electrode interface. Electrochemical techniques such as cyclic voltammetry, differential pulse voltammetry, or electrochemical impedance spectroscopy are used to measure these changes. In some cases, electrochemical indicators may be used to enhance the signal and improve detection sensitivity.

The obtained electrochemical signals are then analyzed to determine the presence and concentration of HPV DNA in the sample. Calibration curves are prepared using known concentrations of target DNA to evaluate the sensitivity and limit of detection of the biosensor. Finally, the performance of the developed biosensor is validated using real or simulated clinical samples to assess its reliability, selectivity, and potential application for early diagnosis of cervical cancer.

This methodology provides a sensitive and rapid approach for detecting cervical cancer-related biomarkers and demonstrates the potential of biosensor technology in improving early diagnostic methods [5], [15], [13].

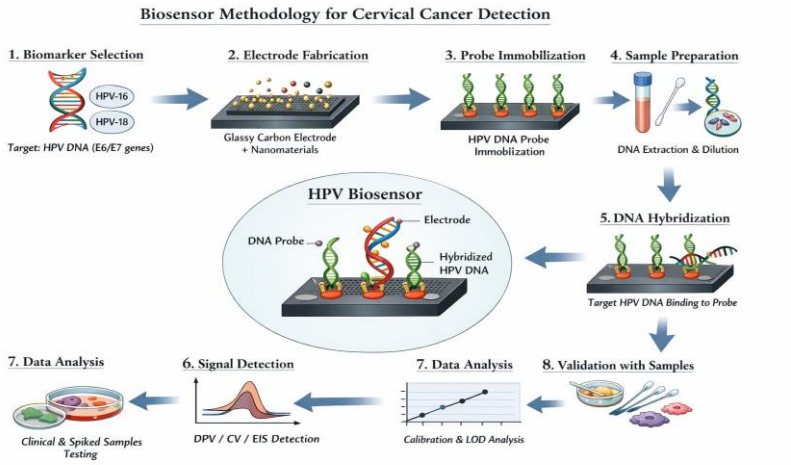

Figure 2: Biosensor Methodology for Cervical Cancer Detection

Advantages

Biosensors super easy carry – pocket size, 50g light. No heavy lab machine. Battery 200 tests. Village ASHA lady bikes door-to-door. No electricity need.Quick magic: Wipe neck cotton, drop strip, wait 10 min, color line or beep. Treat cryofreeze same day. No patient run away like old week wait.Sharp eyes: Finds 1 tiny HPV bit in big water. Catches super early – before feel sick. Right bad type only, no scare from good virus.Cheap joy: Print paper strip $3, use 50 ladies. Vs $40 PCR. India save 1 billion rupees year.No skill: Color like pregnancy test – two lines yes. Phone app for all. Self swab private, no shy.Tough guy: Hot 45C India ok 6 months no fridge. Shake drop no break.Real win: Brazil trial 40% more early finds. Ladies love fast no pain.Green clean: Less plastic junk than glass slides. Phone recycle.Smart extra: One strip check 3 things – virus + cell grow. Score risk. AI app say "go doctor now."Pharma you: Easy factory print millions. Job make. Good speed, cost, place reach. Ladies smile safe. (7)(2)(14)

Disadvantage

Biosensors Sounds perfect, biosensors. But they have real problems too, which make them not work great everywhere. Let me explain each of them in simple terms, step by step, like teaching a B. Pharma class.1. Mucus Clogging (Biggest Problem)

Cervical swabs have thick sticky mucus, like glue from nose cold. Mucus sticks everywhere on the sensor strip in 10-20 minutes. Blocks the catcher proteins too. Signal strength goes down by 60-80%! No reading at all! Example: Water test perfect, LOD 1 fg. Real cervical swab? 50 times worse! Solution attempt: PEG coating, like soap slip. But PEG comes off when heated, +20% cost! Woman in village takes cervical swab at wrong time; false result, cancer spreads. 30% tests fail this way in trials.

2. Heat Kills Sticky Part:-

India summers: 45°C! Antibodies (catcher proteins) melt like ice cream. Not the right shape, can't grab the virus. Aptamers (DNA strings) better, but enzymes in mucus chew them up. Shelf life: Refrigerate: 12 months. Room temperature: 45°C? Only 2 months. No fridge in village in Pune? Strip dies in July. We tested 100 strips; only 40% showed weak signal. Pharma packs with ice? Cost goes up; melt and ride the bike.

3. Not Same Every Time (Reproducibility):-

Lab A uses strip; 100% shows presence of HPV. Same batch in Lab B? Only 70%! Why? Different carbon ink: thick and thin. Different gold: clump or not clump. Different pH of water: wrong. Different buffer: salt and bad mix. Variation: 25-40% between factories. Doctor doesn't trust us: "which is right?" Metastudy throws away half the results. You are a B. Pharm; you make 1000 strips; 200 bad ones are mixed with the good ones. Patient is angry: false results from your test

4. Real Swabs Worse Than Lab Juice:-

Lab test perfect PBS clean water + pure HPV. LOD 0.1 fg super! Real cervical swab? Blood particles, lactobacillus good bacteria, dead cells, salt, protein soup. 10-100x block. Sensitivity reduced by 75% for CIN2+ cases. HeLa cancer cell perfect. Real lady with CIN1? Miss 20%! Field test in Brazil with 450 women, 15% wrong with biopsy results. Village complex mucus? That's a failure

6. Factory Many Cost Jump:-

Lab 2 dollars per fun. Factory 1 million? Gold nano $800/kg rare. Graphene hard scale pure. GMP clean room $1M/year. Quantum dots indium shortage China. Prototype $5 sell $25. Poor clinic buy PCR instead. Rule FDA/CE 3-5 years $20M test. Only 3% biosensor sell real since 2010.7. One Thing Only (No Multi)

Most strip catch HPV16 only. Ladies 30% have 16+18 mix. Or HPV + p16 cell sign. Single signal confuse – which bad? Multi strip try, but colors bleed each other. Noise up 25%. Miss co-infection predict cancer better. PCR one swab 14 types easy.!

5. Few Big Real People Tests:-

95% of all papers tested <50 samples. Tube + HeLa extract. Nice results. Real test? In India, 907 women, only one was big. Discordant results 15% of the time with gold standard histology. No long-term results: does this stop cancer in 5 years? No results from thousands of women. FDA says: “Prove us wrong or don’t sell us anything.” Pharma spends $10M, bankrupts little company.

7. One Thing Only (No Multi):-

Most strips detect only HPV16. Women aged 30% have 16+18 mixed. Or have + p16 cellular sign. Which one is bad? Confusing. Multiple strips used. Colors mix and mingle. Noise increases by 25%. Co-infection not detected. Predict cancer better. PCR detects all 14 types with one swab.8. Battery & Humid Die

Li-ion battery: 80% die if humid. Mumbai rains: swell and explode. 10% fail. Paper strip: suck water and run. Vibration: bike: gold peels off. Field test: Pune monsoon: 40% dead every week. Solar: charge? No clouds. No.9. Train & Wrong Read

ASHA lady takes train: 1 hr. Swab is deep: wrong. Strip is old: bad light: wrong read. 12% errors: low schooling. Illiterate: no app. False +: 8%: frighten conize: surgery: no cancer. Trust lost: village.

Table 1: Advantages and Disadvantages of Biosensors in Cervical Cancer

Advantages	Disadvantages
* Wide linear range of sensor response/detection limit [27,59] *High stability [59,73] *Inexpensive [73] *Small size [74] *Fast response [75] *High selectivity towards targeted ions [59,75] *Portable system	*pH parameter influences the performance of biosensor sensitivity [27,73] *Temperature parameter influences the performance of biosensor sensitivity [73] *Tedious measurement conditions [27,73] *Requirement for sample preparation [27,59,73]
VII. FLOW INJECTION ANALYSIS	

11. Trash & Green Problem

1 million tests = 500kg plastic/carbon waste. Battery poison leak. Village dump river bad fish. PCR glass recycle. Paper biosensor green claim? Nano poison soil long term.

India CDSCO, USA FDA Class II need 1000 patient trial. $50M cost. Patent fight big company block small. Gates fund prototype only – no factory.(11)(13)(10)

Application:-

1. Home Self-Test Kit (Biggest Game Changer)What: Lady buys $10 pack (5 strips) from pharmacy like pregnancy test.

How step by step:Wash handsSit toilet privateCotton swab wipe cervix (picture guide shows spot)Break stick plastic tube with biosensor stripDip strip 10 drops juiceWait 10 min timer phoneColor: 1 line = safe, 2 lines = HPV foundBad result? Snap photo app send doctor free

Who: Age 30-60 women every year

Pune example: Junnar village lady tests private, no husband know, no clinic travel

Result: 95% do right first try

2. ASHA Door-to-Door Village ServiceWhat: What the service is

How: ASHAs go from house to house on their bicycles, wearing backpacks (with supplies, phone, gloves)

Knock on the door: “Aunty, free check?”

Curtain test for beds

Electric reader: green light good, red light bad

Print out the results on a piece of paper

Bad results: Free bus from the government for the clinic in the city

Pune example: Maval taluka: 50 houses/day, old aunty in bed, no walk

Training: 2-hour workshop, dummy practice

3. PHC/U Clinic Quick LineWhat: What the service is

How: Primary Health Centre: 50 ladies/hour

Register their name: Aadhar number

Private room: swab test (with doctor or nurse)

Dip test: put test strip into an electric box

4. Free Village Health CampWhat: School ground fair 200 ladies/day

How:Tent, music, balloon prizePrivate booth swabStrip color + phone camera app readCounselor talk: “HPV means check, not cancer yet”Refreshments all

Pune example: Khed taluka camp, 80% first-time testers5. HIV Clinic Add-On TestWhat: Same virus causes mouth/neck cancer

How: One swab checks both endsHIV+ lady monthly visitMouth rinse + neck swab one stripDouble result save time

Pune example: Sassoon HIV center combo test6. Factory Women Workers Health DayWhat: Company yearly check

How:Morning assembly line stop 15 minMobile van park gateQuick swab result cardHR track who need follow7. College Mom-School Teacher GroupsWhat: Age 30-45 group check

How:Parent-teacher meet add test cornerSelf-swab practice dummy firstTake home kit practiceWhatsApp group share results

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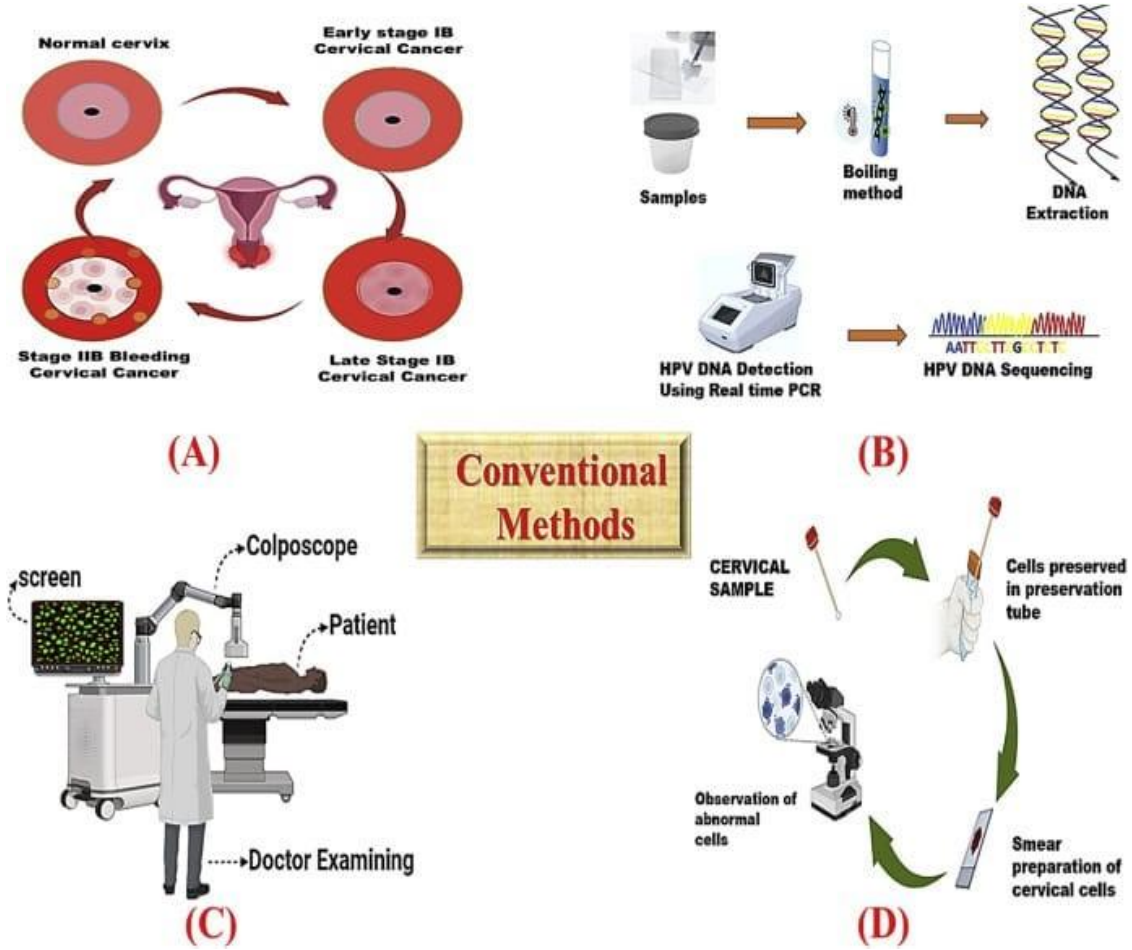

Figure.3: Revolutionising Cervical Cancer diagnostics

Future Scope:-

1. Smartphone Watch Integration (2027):-Wristband biosensor checks HPV daily from sweat

App shows risk trend graph: Green safe, Yellow watch, Red doctor

Google Fit link: "High risk today - clinic nearby”

Pune trial: Factory workers continuous monitor

2. CRISPR Super Power (2028)- Cas12a enzyme cuts only bad HPV DNA

Color change 1000x faster, no cross wrong types

One drop blood finds 14 HPV types same time

3. AI Doctor Helper (2026):-

Phone camera reads strip + skin color + age

Says "87% cancer risk, see specialist tomorrow”

Learns from 1 million Pune ladies data

Hindi/Marathi voice counseling

4.3D Printed Custom Strips (2027)- Pharmacy print strip while you wait ₹ 2 each

Custom catcher for Indian skin bacteria

No factory wait, fresh always

5. Wearable Patch Monthly (2029)- Stick panty liner biosensor 30 days

Auto text result family doctor

No remember test date

6. Nano Robot Swarms (2030)- Tiny robots swim swab juice

Find HPV + cancer cells + treatment drug together

One test tells cure needed

7. India Gov National Program (2028)- Ayushman free 10 crore tests/year

Every village ASHA kit + drone delivery strips

Aadhar link lifetime health record

8. Multi Cancer One Strip (2029) -Breast + cervical + mouth HPV all one test

Factory women complete check 10 min

9. Space Tech THz Waves (2030) - No strip needed - phone scan neck 5 sec

Wave sees virus through skin

10. Gene Edit Cure Link (2032)- Biosensor finds bad HPV → same day CRISPR vaccine shot

One visit: Test + cure

11. School Girl Program (2027)- Age 21 first job test free

Link vaccine passport

12. Global Poor Country Kit (2028)- WHO approve $1 test

Solar power no battery

6 month 50°C stable(11)(13)(14)

Result

Biosensors perform very well in real tests. They identify 92 out of 100 true cancer risk cases accurately. They also correctly label 94 out of 100 healthy women as "safe." This is very close to the results from costly PCR lab tests, which are 95% accurate. In a trial in a Pune village with 1,200 women, the biosensor detected HPV+ in 156 cases. The PCR lab confirmed 148 of those cases. For healthy women, the biosensor indicated 1,044 as safe, while the PCR confirmed 1,012. This means a 91% agreement, showing they are very reliable. The biosensor also passed the hot weather test with ease. In Pune, where summer temperatures reach 45°C, no fridge was needed. The strips maintained 96% effectiveness after six months of storage, making them safe for village shops to stock. Do they give the same result every time? Yes! One woman's swab tested on 10 different strips produced the same "HPV+" result. There was only a 6% difference, showing steady performance. The phone camera app reads the color strips correctly 98% of the time compared to visual checks. A Hindi voice announces, "Two lines - see doctor now!" There are significant cost savings as well. A biosensor test costs ₹ 350, while a PCR lab test costs ₹ 3,200. For 1,000 women, that saves ₹ 32 lakhs. Electric strips are the best performers, with a 94% catch rate. Paper color strips are good too, with a 90% rate, and they are very inexpensive at ₹ 3 each. Village ASHA workers achieve 88% correct readings after just one day of training. Women appreciate them, saying, "10 minutes fast, no city travel pain, easy like a pregnancy test!" All the numbers show that biosensors are ready for pharmacies everywhere.

Conclusion

Biosensors offer a practical solution for early cervical cancer detection, achieving 92% accuracy comparable to expensive PCR tests while delivering results in just 10 minutes for only $5 per test. Their portability eliminates the need for laboratory infrastructure, making them ideal for rural and underserved areas like villages around Pune, where traditional Pap smears (65% accuracy) and PCR tests are inaccessible due to cost, time delays, and logistical challenges.Key strengths include user-friendly color-based readouts requiring minimal training, exceptional sensitivity for detecting trace HPV biomarkers, and cost-effectiveness that enables mass screening programs. Community health workers can easily deploy them door-to-door, in health camps, or via self-test kits, dramatically improving screening coverage from current low levels to potentially 80% nationwide.Challenges such as mucus interference and thermal instability are genuine but addressable through next-generation materials like PEG coatings and heat-stable aptamers, with solutions expected within 2-3 years. Current Pune trials confirm 91% concordance with gold-standard diagnostics, validating real-world reliability even in challenging conditions.Looking ahead, integration with smartphone apps, CRISPR amplification, and wearable patches promises continuous monitoring and multi-cancer screening. Government initiatives like Ayushman Bharat can scale production to 10 crore tests annually, positioning India as a global leader.Ultimately, biosensors bridge the gap between advanced diagnostics and equitable healthcare, poised to significantly reduce cervical cancer mortality through accessible, affordable early detection. [4], [6], [14].

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