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New technique for easier cervical cancer screening

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Duke University researchers have developed a handheld device for cervical cancer screening that promises to do away with uncomfortable speculums and high-cost colposcopes.

The "pocket colposcope" is a slender wand that can connect to many devices, including laptops or cell phones.

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While the Pap smear can be performed by a non-specialist, colposcopy requires visualization of the cervix, relying on highly trained professionals and expensive equipment that is not easily accessible to underserved populations. These factors make cervical cancer more prevalent in women living in low socioeconomic communities.

The researchers are now working on clinical trials to see how their design stacks up against the traditional colposcopy used with a speculum. By using both methods to visualize the cervix, the researchers will be able to make a direct comparison.