



Development of culturally appropriate HPV vaccine educational materials for parents of American Indian adolescents

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Funded through a Prevent Cancer Community Grant to the Minnesota Cancer Alliance

ABSTRACT

Background: American Indians in the Northern Plains face significant cancer disparities, including for HPV cancers. Northern Plains American Indian women are four times more likely to get and die from cervical cancer than the general population. The HPV vaccination prevents strains of HPV that cause 70% of HPV cancers. HPV vaccination rates among American Indians are higher than the general population, but remain low compared to other adolescent vaccines.

Methods: A qualitative, cross-sectional study was designed using focus groups to assess attitudes and beliefs about the HPV vaccine among parents of American Indian children ages 7-12 in order to develop educational materials.

Results: Participants reported a need for more knowledge and awareness about the vaccine in their communities. Other themes included concerns with vaccine safety, the need for improved and American Indian specific messaging, and approval of cancer-centered messages.

Conclusions: Several significant themes emerged that diverge with findings from other populations, most notably that no participants were concerned that vaccinating their children would lead to early sexual initiation. These differentials underscore the need for culturally appropriate and specific educational materials and interventions to increase vaccination rates.

OBJECTIVES

Focus group questions were designed to answer four primary research questions:

1. Where are the knowledge gaps about the HPV vaccine?
2. What are attitudes and beliefs about the HPV vaccine?
3. What other barriers are preventing parents from vaccinating their children?
4. How can HPV vaccine educational materials be improved for American Indian communities?

METHODS

- 7 focus groups
- 39 participants
- Eligibility: Parent or guardian of American Indian child age 7-12
- Minneapolis/St. Paul metro area
- Recruitment through multiple channels
 - Flyers in American Indian neighborhoods
 - Social media
 - Community events
- Qualitative data coded through inductive process
- Focus group results used to inform development of culturally appropriate educational materials.

RESULTS



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Participants:

- Urban American Indians
- Female (95%)
- Parents (82%)

Survey:

- I understand what HPV is. (61%)
- I understand what the HPV vaccine is. (49%)
- I have enough information about the HPV vaccine to decide whether to vaccinate my child. (34%)

RESULTS

Themes:

- Need for more knowledge and awareness
“I kind of feel like even though I’ve heard about the HPV vaccine in all these places I still don’t know that much.”
- Influences to vaccinate a child come from several places, community first
- Messages about the HPV vaccine should focus on cancer, be specific to American Indians, include boys, and come from a trusted source
- Safety concerns
- Unnecessary connection to sex
“When you get your child a vaccination like this, I don’t look at it like, “Hey! Green light! Go ahead and start being sexually active!” At the time I was taking a precaution for her future. She’s little. She’s playing with Barbies. I wasn’t worried about it.”

- Mistrust
“They’ve used us as medical experiments. There’s a history of the medical field and American Indians that hasn’t really been that...pleasant. I can’t think of the word. So there’s a mistrust.”

- Fear of infectious disease



HPV Cancer Prevention

A parent’s guide to the HPV vaccine for your preteen

The American Indian Cancer Foundation asked parents what they need to know about the HPV vaccine. We listened, and want to give you the best information to help make the right choice for your child.

Why does my child need the HPV vaccine? Is it necessary?

Cancer is a leading cause of death for American Indians. By getting the HPV vaccine for your child, you can protect them from common HPV cancers, which include cervical, anal, penile, vaginal, and some throat cancers. American Indians are at higher risk for many of the HPV cancers. In some regions, American Indians are four times more likely to get cervical cancer, the most common HPV cancer.

What is the best age to get the vaccine?

The vaccine is designed to be most effective for children ages 11-12. A child can get the vaccine at age 9. It’s possible to get the vaccine after age 12, but it is not as effective. Getting the vaccine now, when it is most effective, will protect your child from cancers later in life.

What is HPV, and what does it have to do with cancer?

HPV is a common infection that can lead to several types of cancers. HPV is passed from skin-to-skin, usually during sex. Almost all people will come into contact with HPV in their lives. It is important to get the vaccine before coming into contact with HPV, which can develop into cancer.

Is it for boys and girls?

Yes. Both males and females can get throat and anal cancers from HPV. Men can also get penile cancer. Women can also get cervical, vaginal, and vulvar cancers.

Is it safe?

Yes. There have been 57 million doses of the HPV vaccine given, with zero serious safety concerns.

Does it actually prevent cancer?

Yes. HPV causes 99.9% of cervical cancers and the majority of other HPV cancers. The vaccine prevents the types of HPV that cause 70% of these cancers.

How can I get the vaccine?

Talk to your doctor about the HPV vaccine, even if they don’t bring it up. The vaccine is free for all American Indians through the Vaccines for Children program.



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REFERENCES

Minnesota Department of Health (2012), Cancer in Minnesota: 1988 - 2009 Report to the Minnesota Legislature

Watson, M., Benard, V., Thomas, C., Brayboy, A., Paisano, R., & Becker, T. (2014). Cervical cancer incidence and mortality among American Indian and Alaska Native women, 1999-2009. *American journal of public health*, 104(S3), S415-S422.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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