New Research Reinforces American Cancer Society and American Academy of Pediatrics Recommendation to Start HPV Vaccines at Age Nine

ATLANTA, April 18, 2023 – A new collection of articles expands on research showing that initiating the human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccination series at age nine improves vaccination utilization and increases the number of adolescents who complete their series on time compared to starting at ages 11-12. The 2023 Human Vaccines & Immunotherapeutics Collection sponsored by the American Cancer Society, the National HPV Vaccination Roundtable, and the St. Jude HPV Cancer Prevention Program is now available in the Human Vaccines and Immunotherapeutics Journal.

“This new research provides more evidence that starting vaccination early will reach more adolescents,” said Dr. Rebecca Perkins, one of the chairs of the National HPV Vaccination Roundtable and guest editors for the Special Collection of new evidence. “The HPV vaccine is a critical tool protecting against numerous HPV cancers, and now more kids will have protection if the vaccine series is started at age nine.”

The collection of 20 articles shows the benefits, effectiveness, and acceptability of routinely recommending HPV vaccination for all preteens starting at age nine. The findings include increases of up to 30 percentage points in on-time completion rates among both publicly and privately insured adolescents. Quality improvement initiatives showed large gains, indicating that clinicians are willing to recommend vaccination at age nine and parents are willing to accept it and that the behavior change can be acceptable to both clinicians and parents.

“We stand united with all of our partners in spreading the word about the need for healthcare providers to start the vaccine series and the conversations about offering the HPV vaccine at age nine,” said Dr. Debbie Saslow, strategic director, screening and vaccination at the American Cancer Society. “It is critical that parents and guardians understand the benefits of this recommendation and how it may lead to a long and healthy life.”

The benefits of starting HPV vaccination at age nine include a strong immune response, safeguarding children and adolescents against more than 90% of HPV cancers later in life, fewer shots per visit, easier conversations with parents, and more opportunities to vaccinate as more preteens present for care than older teens.

In the United States, each year 44,000 individuals are diagnosed with HPV-associated cancers, with 35,000 of those attributable to HPV. Yet, HPV vaccination rates are lower than in other countries. Furthermore, the pandemic dramatically lowered the rate of vaccinations by 20 to 24 percent. This has led researchers to predict that it will take about 10 years for the United States to catch up to pre-pandemic rates.

To spread the word about starting HPV vaccination at age nine, the National HPV Vaccination Roundtable created several resources to support health systems, healthcare providers, public health agencies, and health plans as part of the ‘Start at Age 9 Campaign’ including video abstracts from authors of the collections, webinars, print materials, and more. To view the video abstracts highlighting key articles click here.

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