

Lack of clarity about HPV vaccine and the need for cervical cancer screening

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The research will be presented today at the Annual Scientific Meeting of the Society of Academic Primary Care, hosted this year by the Academic Unit of Primary Health Care, University of Bristol.

The HPV vaccination programme, introduced in the UK in 2008, uses [HPV vaccine](#) that is effective against the two most common high risk HPV types (16 and 18), and offers 70 per cent protection against cervical cancer. However, vaccinated [girls](#) will still need to attend cervical screening in the future to ensure protection against cervical cancer caused by high risk HPV types not included in the vaccine.

Dr Alison Clements and colleagues interviewed parents and vaccination-aged girls about their understanding of the HPV vaccination in relation to vaccine acceptance, and potential future cervical cancer screening behaviour.

They found a lack of clarity amongst both parents and girls about the link between the HPV vaccine and the need for future cervical screening. In some cases parental consent for their daughters to receive the vaccine was based on the false belief that cervical screening would not be necessary. There was also a profound lack of awareness about cervical screening amongst girls of vaccination age.

Dr Clements said: "For informed decisions about HPV vaccination to be made, the provision of information about the ongoing need to attend cervical screening is imperative. Our findings have the potential to

improve information and [educational materials](#) for parents, eligible girls and [health professionals](#). To ensure the uptake of cervical screening is not adversely affected, future invitations for screening will need to stress the importance of attendance regardless of whether the individual has had the HPV vaccination or not."

Hazel Nunn, Cancer Research UK's senior health information manager, said: "This is a helpful reminder that renewed efforts are needed to inform girls and their families about the importance of cervical screening in those who have had the HPV vaccination. While the [vaccine](#) is very effective at protecting against the two strains of virus which cause most cases of cervical cancer, and one of the biggest steps forward in public health in recent years, it does not protect against all the other strains so the disease can still develop.

"[Cervical screening](#) can prevent around 34 per cent of cervical cancers in women in their 30s, rising to 75 per cent in women in their 50s and 60s. Women should be reminded of the crucial role of screening in the fight against [cervical cancer](#)."

Provided by University of Bristol

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