

Increased knowledge of HPV vaccines does not predict a higher rate of vaccination, study finds

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A young man receives a vaccination. The cost and reimbursement levels of vaccines vary widely, according to new studies from the University of Michigan Health System. Credit: Scott Soderberg, University of Michigan

"Knowledge is power" is an old saying. Another cliché warns, "a little knowledge is a dangerous thing." When it comes to getting inoculated against the Human Papilloavirus (HPV), it seems that neither saying is true. In fact, according to a study by a multidisciplinary University of

Pennsylvania research team, knowledge may in fact be a meaningless thing.

A year-long study of over 360 adolescents who were considered to be ideal candidates to receive the HPV vaccine showed that neither increased parental or adolescent knowledge about HPV or the vaccine resulted in higher rates of vaccination. That is, those with higher levels of knowledge were not more likely to obtain vaccination for themselves or their daughters.

The study, reported in the journal *Pediatrics*, raises questions about traditional dogma related to using public service announcements and other educational efforts to increase knowledge about the vaccination.

Researchers Jessica Fishman, PhD; Lynne Taylor, PhD, Patricia Kooker, MS, and Ian Frank, MD from the University of Pennsylvania's Annenberg School for Communication and the Perelman School of Medicine, surveyed a group of adolescents and parents of adolescents who participated in surveys administered by the researchers to determine their knowledge of HPV and the HPV [vaccine](#). The study was funded in part by the Center of Excellence in Cancer Communication Research (CECCR) at the Annenberg School for Communication.

In addition to surveying participants, the researchers tracked whether vaccinations were received, via an analysis of clinical records kept through Philadelphia's Kids Immunizations Database/Tracking System (KIDS).

The results of the surveys showed that only about 14 percent of the [adolescents](#) were ultimately vaccinated.

"Knowledge was neither necessary nor sufficient. Although knowledge is often assumed to be key to increasing [vaccination rates](#), it may be unwise

to place so much promise on knowledge," said Fishman, the study's lead author. Providers who reduce missed opportunities to offer vaccination, along with convenient and affordable vaccination may be very important. While the vaccination is shown to be effective, uptake remains very low in this high-risk population."

Provided by University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine

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