

Case comprehensive cancer center endorses elimination of HPV-related cancers

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Nearly 80 million Americans—one out of every four people—are infected with human papillomavirus (HPV). And of those millions, more than 31,000 will be diagnosed with an HPV-related cancer this year. Despite those staggering figures and the availability of a vaccine to prevent the infections that cause these cancers, HPV vaccination remains low in the U.S.

Case Comprehensive Cancer Center has partnered with 69 other National Cancer Institute (NCI)-designated cancer centers to issue a statement urging increased HPV vaccination and screening to eliminate HPV-related cancers, starting with cervical cancer.

"I'm really proud of Cleveland's city-wide effort in screening and prevention," said Stanton L. Gerson, MD, Director of the Case Comprehensive Cancer Center. "There's been a longstanding interest in improving the rates of HPV vaccination, and we've negotiated and interacted with our two affiliate hospitals who have both almost tripled their rate of vaccinations of 11-year-old boys and girls for HPV over the past five years."

Case Comprehensive Cancer Center's affiliate hospitals have been heavily involved in on-the-ground efforts to increase HPV vaccinations throughout the city.

"Over the past five years, our community outreach team has been educating parents, grandparents and children on the importance of

cancer prevention at back-to-school events sponsored by the City of Cleveland," said Kim Bell, Cleveland Clinic Taussig Cancer Institute Administrator, who is leading efforts to increase [vaccine](#) uptake in Cleveland. "Providers are improving their conversations and parents are listening to the benefits this vaccine has for their child, and in turn we've seen an increase in vaccination rates and awareness."

NCI-designated cancer centers recognize insufficient vaccination as a public health threat and are calling upon the nations' physicians, parents and young adults to take advantage of this rare opportunity to eliminate several types of cancer in men and women.

"We have worked to greatly improve HPV vaccination rates for the past five years, but we can and need to do better," said Andrew Hertz, MD, Vice President of the UH Rainbow Primary Care Institute, who is also at the forefront of increasing vaccinations in Cleveland. "Preventing cancer through vaccination is an intervention that should be universal. As child advocates, our clinicians and staff educate parents every day of the importance of early HPV vaccination."

HPV vaccination rates remain significantly lower than other recommended adolescent vaccines in the U.S. According to the CDC, less than 50 percent of girls and 38 percent of boys completed the recommended vaccine series. Research shows there are a number of barriers to overcome in order to improve vaccination rates. Physicians need to strongly recommend HPV vaccine to patients, and parents must understand that this vaccine protects against several types of cancer in both men and women. HPV causes multiple cancers including cervical, anal, oropharyngeal (middle throat) and other genital cancers.

HPV experts from the nation's top cancer centers, along with partners from the NCI, CDC, and the American Cancer Society, are holding meetings to discuss a path forward to eliminating cancers caused by

HPV, including ways to reduce barriers to vaccination, as well as share education, training and intervention strategies to improve vaccination rates.

This is the third year that all NCI-designated cancer centers have come together to issue a national call to action. All 70 [cancer](#) centers unanimously share the goal of sending a powerful message to parents, adolescents and health care providers about the importance of HPV vaccination for the elimination of HPV-related cancers.

Provided by Case Western Reserve University

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