

Unprotected People #86

Human papillomavirus (HPV)

HPV Vaccine Has Potential to Reduce Worldwide Cancer Deaths by more than 200,000

The following article was written by Sarina Araujo, executive director of the National Cervical Cancer Coalition (NCCC), and Alan Kaye, chairman of NCCC's board of directors. NCCC is a grassroots nonprofit organization serving women with, or at risk for, cervical cancer and human papillomavirus (HPV) infection.

According to the American Cancer Society, in 2005 more than 10,000 U.S. women were estimated to have developed cervical cancer, and nearly 4,000 died. Cervical cancer strikes women in the prime of their lives, often while they are working and responsible for children and extended family. It is caused by persistent infection with the cancer-causing strains of HPV.

"It is time for us all to face the fact that the HPV virus is implicated in a variety of specific cancers," says Alan Kaye. "Without being an alarmist, I believe it is fair to say that further cancer research must be continued on HPV disease so we can better understand the science between HPV disease and the different cancers it impacts. It is exciting to know we now have a vaccine that can help reduce cervical cancer rates in the United States. Worldwide, having a cervical cancer/HPV vaccine implemented in all developing countries would represent the single most effective cancer prevention strategy in our lifetime. Given the fact that these vaccines are a historic breakthrough in our battle against cancer

through prevention, I believe it is our obligation to work hard to help assure there will be worldwide access for anyone desiring their cervical cancer/HPV vaccine. Imagine, over the next generation or two, worldwide cervical cancer death rates could be reduced by more than 200,000. Furthermore, we very well may see a reduction of cancer deaths in some other HPV-related cancers. Implementation of an affordable HPV vaccine worldwide should be a major priority in the global war against cancer. This cancer war, with a prevention strategy, is a fight all nations can join together in and win!"

NCCC executive director Sarina Araujo is battling persistent HPV infection, which has involved multiple surgical procedures (e.g., loop electro-surgical excision procedures, biopsies, and colposcopies). "I look forward to my three daughters receiving their HPV/cervical cancer vaccine," Araujo says. "I'm hopeful they will be able to receive the vaccine at their current ages of 20, 18, and 14 years. My girls have been raised with a solid religious foundation, and I am proud of who they are and their ability to make sound decisions. However, they can not predict who their husbands may be and know for certain their future husband's past. I hope my girls and someday, my grandchildren will be able to receive this cancer vaccine," she adds.

To learn more about NCCC, visit www.nccc-online.org