African American Attitudes toward HPV Vaccination

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Cervical Cancer

African American cervical cancer incidence rates exceed that of the general population of the US, as do cervical cancer mortality rates (NCI, 2007).
Cervical Cancer
Cervical Cancer
HPV: African American Women

- One factor in excess cervical cancer incidence and mortality is human papillomavirus (HPV) infection.

- African American women had an overall HPV prevalence of 39.2% (31.0, 49.4 confidence interval).

- HPV 16 virus accounts for approximately half of all of these cancers, and is highest among African American women.
  - 19.1 percent compared to 12.5 percent among white women (Dunne, 2007).
HPV Vaccination

• There is now an approved prophylactic vaccine.

• The prophylactic vaccine is effective against HPV types 16, 18, 6, and 11.
• Recommended for girls:
  – As young as 9,
  – Primarily those 11 to 12 years of age,
  – 13 to 18 to catch up missed vaccination or complete the series.
**Figure 1.** Natural history of HPV infection and cervical cancer. (Schiffman M, Castle P. N Engl J Med 2005; 353:2101–2104)

Top panel: The peak prevalence of transient infections with carcinogenic types of HPV occurs in teens and twenties following the initiation of sexual activity. The peak prevalence of cervical precancer occurs approximately 10 years later, and peak prevalence of invasive cancers occurs at ages 40–50.

Bottom panel: The conventional model of cervical cancer prevention is based on repeated rounds of cytology and colposcopy. Alternative strategies include HPV vaccination of adolescents and/or one or two rounds of HPV screening at the peak ages of treatable precancer and early cancer.
African American HPV Knowledge

- A general lack of knowledge and awareness about HPV among ethnic minority women.

- 67.5% of African American women compared to 58% of white women had never heard of HPV.

- Among these women, only 41.4% of African American women believed that HPV was a cause of cervical cancer. (Data from the Health Information National Trends Study (HINTS) 2005)

- Lower rates of vaccination have been reported for African Americans compared to whites (Lindley, 2006)
Research Goals

- Identify the social and cultural factors that influence African American parent’s decisions to obtain HPV vaccination.

- Consider HPV vaccination promotion strategies that are consistent with cultural beliefs relevant to this population.
Research Methods

• Focus Groups (N= 35)

• Interviews (N=10)

• St. Louis Metropolitan Area

• Assessed:
  – cervical cancer
  – HPV virus and vaccine knowledge
  – Attitudes and structural barriers to HPV vaccination
Findings

• Have limited knowledge about what cervical cancer is, difficulty defining or explaining it.

• Knowledge of HPV was limited.

• Of those aware of HPV:  
  – it was through personal experience or through contact with someone who contracted the virus.

• The majority of participants had never heard of the HPV vaccine.
Findings

- Of those who had heard of the vaccine, most were aware due to contact with someone infected or through television advertising.

- Participants reported mixed feelings about the vaccine.
  - Questions about costs
  - Potential side effects

- Unaware of who should be vaccinated.

- Participants seem largely unaware that:
  - the vaccine is targeted toward adolescent females
  - that effectiveness has not been demonstrated for older women.
Next Steps

• Cross sectional survey
  – 200 African American parents of vaccine eligible females;
  – 30 in-depth parent interviews

• To describe:
  – the individual characteristics
  – cultural attitudes
  – social and environmental factors that affect African American parents’ intent to vaccinate.