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Exploration Essay

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Should Vaccination for HPV Be Mandated for Teenage Girls?

**Issue Overview: Vaccination**

When it comes to sex or any topic related to that matter, it can be uncomfortable for parents talking to their children about it. Some might think talking about it means they’re condoning when in reality you’re just trying to raise awareness. Some parents just avoid that subject period. So when you avoid that, how else are children going to become aware of the consequences that lead to having premarital sex? Consequences such as pregnancy, STD’S, and STI’S which can eventually turn into serious health problems. Human papillomavirus also known as HPV is an infection that causes warts in various parts of the body depending on the strain. According to the CDC, HPV is the most common sexually transmitted infection. There are many different types of HPV and some types can cause some health problems including warts and cancers. But there are vaccines that can prevent both of these from happening. Compulsory human papillomavirus vaccination of young girls has been proposed as a public health intervention to reduce the threat of the disease. I don’t think people are fully aware of that HPV can lead to cervical cancer.

**Perspective One: How are teens affected by HPV?**

According to the CDC in 2011 about half of girls in high school have had vaginal sex. About 3% of high school students first had vaginal sex before age 13. (cdc) The vaccines are recommended for girls ages 11 to 13 because most girls at this age have not become sexually active. If they have been sexually active, most girls are likely have been exposed to only 1 or 2 types, so the vaccine will be partially protective. This is also an age when girls will still be seeing their doctors and getting other vaccinations.

**Perspective Two: Who has the right to decide if the child gets vaccinated or not?**

According to Joseph E. Balong “in the case of HPV vaccination of youths who have not yet been exposed to HPV, the right of the child to receive the preventive measure should override respect for the parents’ autonomy and the parents desire to teach social beliefs that restrict health care action, because the health threat directly involves the life of the child. The rights, autonomy, and desires of parents are important, but the consequences of the decision affect them indirectly. If respect for parental autonomy leads to denying children access to effective health care, the probability of harm and the loss of benefits are much greater for the children than for their parents. Disease, disability, and loss of life are burdens for both individuals and society that outweigh the benefits derived from upholding parental rights and authority. Furthermore, the availability of a voluntary or compulsory vaccination program does not deprive parents of the opportunity, or the right, to teach their own values to their children. IT simply helps to ensure health care for all.” (Balog, Joseph) Here is a quote from Colgrove “Minors have a right to be protected against vaccine-preventable illness, and society has an interest in safeguarding the welfare of children who may be harmed by the choices of their parents and guardians.” (Colgrove, J.) With those facts, would there be other reasons to oppose this? The opposing side believes so. Based on the current scientific evidence, vaccinating girls against HPV before they are sexually active appears to provide significant protection against cervical cancer. The vaccine thus represents a significant public health advance. Nevertheless, mandating HPV vaccination at the present time would be premature and ill-advised. The vaccine is relatively new, and long-term safety and effectiveness in the general populations is unknown. Vaccination outcomes of those voluntarily vaccinated should be followed for several years before public health necessity of the type that has justified previous vaccine mandates. State mandates could therefore lead to a public backlash that will undermine both HPV vaccination efforts and existing vaccination programs. Finally, the economic consequences of mandating HPV are significant and could have a negative impact on financial support for other vaccines as well as other public health programs. (Javitt, G, Berkowitz, Deena, Gostin, Lawerence)

**Perspective Three: Is The HPV Vaccination Safe?**

In 2014, before it was licensed by the FDA, the safety of Gardasil 9 was evaluated across seven studies. The safety findings from these pre-licensure studies show it has a similar safety profile to Gardasil. The main findings from these studies are: the most common side effect reported was pain, swelling, and redness in the arm where the shot was given. These mild side effects may occur more often after Gardasil 9 vaccination than after Gardasil. Some people are allergic to certain ingredients in vaccines, and vaccines, including HPV vaccines, can cause anaphylaxis among people with severe allergies. This is very rare. People with severe allergies to any component of a vaccine should not receive that vaccine. (http://www.cdc.gov/vaccinesafety/vaccines/hpv-vaccine.html)

**Perspective Four: Are there laws requiring for the HPV Vaccination?**

“The debate in states has centered-in part-around school vaccine requirements, which are determined by individual states.  Some states grant regulatory bodies, like the Board of Health, the power to require vaccines, but the legislature must still provide funding.  Some people who support availability of the vaccine do not support a school mandate, citing concerns about the drug's cost, safety, and parents' rights to refuse.  Still others may have moral objections related to a vaccine mandate for a sexually transmitted disease.  Financing is another concern: if states make the vaccine mandatory, they must also address funding issues, including for Medicaid and SCHIP coverage and youth who are uninsured, and whether to require coverage by insurance plans.  This has caused some to push for further discussion and debate about whether or not to require the vaccine.” ( http://www.ncsl.org/research/health/hpv-vaccine-state-legislation-and-statutes.aspx)

**Conclusion:**

Seeing that cervical cancer are caused by HPV, I would say that we should recommend it that it be a mandatory vaccination for girls and women. It is said that most adults have been infected with HPV at some time. An infection may go away on its own. If it doesn’t, it can cause genital warts or lead to cervical cancer. I think the HPV vaccine is misunderstood and people aren’t educated about it. I feel parents are uncomfortable talking about sex with their young children and they probably feel if they let them get the vaccine they’re condoning sex. No, they are protecting their young child from in the future and the potential of getting HPV.

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