

Executive Summary

Cervical Cancer is the second most common cancer acquired by a woman globally and accounts for the primary cause of cancer-related deaths in women in developing countries. (Pollack et al., 2007). An estimated 80% of the burden of CCA occurs in women of the developing world, with the highest incidence rates in Africa, Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean (Oaknin & Barretina, 2008). While certain behavioral factors such as high parity, age at sexual debut and smoking all contribute to the development of CCA, persistent prolonged infection with the sexually transmitted human papillomavirus is the only causal factor in the production of CCA (Shapiro et al, 2006). Two prophylactic vaccines were recently licensed for use that protect against the two most common oncogenic types of HPV: types 16 and 18. The FDA approved a tetravalent vaccine, Gardasil, in June 2006, that protects against HPV 16 and 18 and also against HPV 6 and 11. A second bivalent HPV vaccine, Cervarix, was licensed soon after in May 2007. These vaccines have great potential to decrease the burden of CCA worldwide. However, to date they have only been implemented in developing countries, and no prior studies have assessed the acceptability of an HPV vaccination, post-approval, in LAC.

Population that influence uptake of the vaccine include the general public, health care providers and policy makers. Acceptance of an HPV vaccination among all these populations is key for its successful implementation in developing countries that need in most (Winkler et al., 2008). This study aims to assess the opinion of these population surrounding the HPV vaccine in Santiago, Chile. Furthermore, this study intends to specifically assess what would encourage these populations to use or recommend the HPV vaccine and what would discourage their use or recommendation. This is the first HPV vaccine acceptability study to be conducted in Chile, the first study to assess opinions of the true HPV vaccine target population, adolescent girls, and the first investigation to assess and compare, in one study, the opinion of all key groups necessary for successful vaccine uptake.

This study uses qualitative methods to achieve its objectives. Focus Group Discussion were employed to evaluate HPV vaccine acceptability among the recipient population and their parents. In-depth interviews were used to assess acceptability among key information in the medical and political communities. Results were analyzed using thematic content analysis. The Ethics Committees of the Charite Universitaetsmedizin, Berlin, and the Universidad de los Andes, Santiago, Approved the study before implementation.

The results of this study indicate that the general public and the medical and political communities in Santiago, Chile, would accept an HPV vaccination, although they do not believe it should be mandatory. The primary reason for acceptability of the vaccine was to prevent cancer, a disease that all populations perceive to be grave. The primary barrier to acceptability among all populations assessed was the high cost of the vaccine. Other barrier included the safety and effectiveness of the vaccine and perceived values issues surrounding a vaccination that protects against a sexually transmitted infection. The result also indicate that both medical and professional communities perceive sexuality issue to be a greater barrier to implementation than general public. All target population believe that implementing that vaccine through the Chilean public health system would increase its uptake by either partially or completely covering the cost.

The key recommendation resulting from this study is to increase knowledge about HPV, CCA and the HPV vaccine among all key population necessary to successful vaccine uptake in Santiago, Chile. The implementation of CCA and HPV vaccine information

campaigns through the media could lower implementation barrier relating to concerns about the vaccine's safety and effectiveness and values issues surrounding the vaccine and sexuality. Future research in the region should assess the opinions of the Catholic Church and other religious sectors that have the potential to influence the vaccine's acceptability. Successful implementation of an HPV vaccination program, however, will depend on a significant reduction in the vaccine's cost, a factor that is outside the scope of this study.