



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive

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19th. November 2019

Deputy Michael Healy-Rae
Dail Eireann
Kildare Street
Dublin 2

PQ45812/19: To ask the Minister for Health the evidence that the HPV vaccine prevents cancer *(details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter.

***Minister in relation to the Gardasil HPV vaccine which claims to prevent HPV cancer. As you are aware there is no conclusive evidence presently to prove such a statement is true. In fact the HSE and the medical profession are at pains to highlight the reduction in case in Australia with a high uptake of the vaccine. However proponents of the HPV vaccine including the HSE and your department fail to inform those whom you speak to of the increased cases of cancer in the vaccinated population in Australia of which this information is readily available on Australian government websites.**

Dear Deputy Healy-Rae,

The above PQ has been sent to me to respond directly to you on same.

Since the 1970's it has been known that cervical cancer is caused by human papillomavirus (HPV) infection. In over 99% of cases, cervical cancer develops only when there is HPV infection by one or more of 14 oncogenic (cancer causing) HPV types. Following HPV infection it takes 15 to 20 years for cervical cancer to develop in most women with a normal immune system.

HPV vaccination prevents infection by the most common HPV strains known to cause cervical cancers.

Each year in Ireland, over 6,500 women need hospital treatment for pre-cancer of the cervix, almost 300 women are diagnosed with cancer of the cervix, and 90 women die from this cancer.

The National Immunisation Advisory Committee (NIAC) an independent committee of the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland makes recommendation on vaccination policy in Ireland. NIAC recommends that all females at 12-13 years of age should receive human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine as part of the national HPV vaccination programme on the recommendation of the World Health Organization.

Since 2010 the HSE has offered the HPV vaccine (Gardasil) to all girls in first year in second level schools as primary prevention of HPV infection. The HPV programme in Ireland was changed to Gardasil 9 which provides more protection and extended to include both boys and girls in first year of second level school from September 2019.

Universal vaccination for boys and girls will protect boys as well as girls from infection with HPV, which will in time protect them from the development of HPV related cancers. Work by HIQA before the extension of the HPV vaccine to boys noted that the extension of the HPV programme to boys will also prevent further cervical cancer in women by herd immunity and will be likely to reduce the overall burden of HPV related malignancy sooner than would a girls only programme.

There is already strong and extensive scientific evidence on the impact of HPV vaccine for women's health in countries that introduced the vaccine and that have had high vaccine uptake rates. There is scientific evidence showing the efficacy of Gardasil in reducing HPV infections and precancers of the cervix in reports from Australia, Denmark, Sweden, and Canada. The HSE information for parents on the HPV vaccine programme highlights the reduction in high grade cervical pre-cancers in Australia in girls under the age of 18 years.

The HSE information also mentions that routine HPV vaccination of 90% of all girls aged 12-13 years in Scotland since 2008 has led to a dramatic reduction in cervical precancers with an 89% drop in the numbers of those with high grade cervical lesions, as reported in the British Medical Journal in March 2019. This dramatic reduction in HPV infection and precancers of the cervix show the HPV vaccine is effective and reducing HPV infections and pre-cancerous cell changes and so will lead to a reduction in the number of women who develop cervical cancer in the future.

There is no published research showing an increase in cervical cancer cases in those vaccinated with HPV vaccine in Australia.

As it takes 15 to 20 years for cervical cancer to develop in women it may take another decade before the full impact of the effectiveness of HPV vaccine in preventing cervical cancer is known.

Nevertheless in Scotland, Information Services Division (ISD) Scottish Cancer Registry reported in April 2019 that while there was no significant change in cervical cancer rates overall in Scotland, there was a reduction among younger women in 2017 that, together with reductions in pre-cancerous conditions, indicate that HPV vaccination has been effective.

In May 2018, the Director-General of the World Health Organization announced a global call to action towards the elimination of cervical cancer, underscoring renewed political will to make elimination a reality, and called for all stakeholders to unite behind [this common goal](#). A global target of 90% of girls fully vaccinated with the HPV vaccine by 15 years of age, by 2030, has been proposed by WHO as key to achieving cervical cancer elimination.

The www.hpv.ie website contains over 90 scientific publications about the safety and effectiveness of HPV vaccine if you require further information.

I trust this information will be of assistance to you.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kevin Kelleher', with a horizontal line underneath.

DR. KEVIN KELLEHER, FFPHM, FFPHMI
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