

A Novel Collaboration Between Medical and Dental Providers: Identification of Gaps in HPV Vaccination Status

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Background:

1. Nearly 80 million Americans are currently infected with HPV (1)
2. 650,000 new head & neck cancer cases yearly, leading to 350,000 deaths (2)
3. HPV is thought to cause 70% of new head & neck cancers (3)
4. HPV vaccination would prevent 90% of HPV-associated cancers (4).

Introduction:

- Our family medicine residency program shares clinical space with a one-chair dental clinic in our federally designated Rural Health Center.
- Our Public Health Dental Hygiene Practitioner (PHDHP), our Associate Program Director and residents began collaborating to increase rates of HPV vaccination in our clinic and community.
- We accept dental referrals from outside of our practice, but as we are a Vaccines for Children site, we offer vaccinations for patients regardless of insurance status or ability to pay.
- We counsel about HPV and head & neck cancer and offer patients vaccines at their dental visits.



Plan-Do-Study-Act:

Our baseline rate for HPV vaccination in 11–26-year-olds was 76% (national average of 75%). All patients scheduled for the dental clinic were screened for age (9 to 26 years) and for HPV vaccination status. Eligible patients 18 years of age and older were contacted through the patient portal of the EMR and given information about HPV, head & neck cancer and their available vaccines. All eligible patients were given non-branded, St Luke's University Health Network approved, culturally sensitive patient education materials at their dental visits. To date, we have covered 12 months of patient screenings, and have given 11 HPV vaccines at dental visits.

Discussion:

Most vaccinations, including HPV, are provided during well-child visits at a pediatrician's office or during encounters with family practitioners. This interdisciplinary collaboration offers a unique chance to administer important vaccinations that might otherwise not reach patients. At only 12 months into our collaboration, we have seen promising early results which will no doubt be expanded with time.

References:

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3. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Cancers Caused by HPV are Preventable website. Accessed February 3, 2022. <https://www.cdc.gov/hpv/hcp/protecting-patients.html>.
4. National HPV Vaccination Roundtable. Cancer Prevention Through HPV Vaccination: An Action Guide for Dental Health Care Providers. <http://hpvroundtable.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/DENTAL-Action-Guide-WEB.pdf>pdf icon