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Women's Health Specialists Welcome New Cervical Cancer Prevention Vaccine

Ottawa— The Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada (SOGC) welcomes the latest breakthrough in the fight to prevent cervical cancer. The new Cervarix vaccine represents an important new option for Canadian women wanting to prevent specific strains of the Human papillomavirus, commonly referred to as HPV, that account for 70% of cases of cervical cancer in this country.

“Each year, more than 580 Canadian women die of cervical cancer, with thousands more receiving the diagnosis. Women are dying needlessly from this largely preventable disease. Cervarix is a welcomed addition to Canada’s arsenal in the fight against HPV and cervical cancer,” said Dr. Michel Fortier, President of the SOGC.

The Human papillomavirus is a highly contagious virus that is transmitted by skin-to-skin sexual contact. As many as 75% of Canadian women of reproductive age will be exposed to HPV in their lifetime. It can potentially affect anyone who has ever had a sexual encounter, even without penetration. It is possible for someone to have HPV and not even know it because there are often no signs or symptoms.

It is important for us to remind women that cervical cancer, when detected early, is a highly curable cancer. The SOGC is confident that the availability of this new vaccine will help reduce the incidence of cervical cancer and its precursors.

In order to ensure people are aware of the HPV public health threat, the SOGC will continue to pursue its public education campaign emphasizing the importance of pelvic exams, and Pap smear screening for cervical cancer, and the benefits of vaccination. Canadians are invited to visit the www.hpvinfos.ca website for more information.

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About the Human Papillomavirus

The Human papillomavirus is a sexually transmitted virus that is highly contagious. Because it is transmitted by skin-to-skin contact during sexual activity, anyone who has ever had a sexual encounter, even without penetration, can contract HPV. It is possible for someone to have HPV and not even know it because there are often no signs or symptoms.

HPV is the leading cause of cervical and anal cancer in women. While using condoms is a good protection strategy, they do not provide 100% protection against the transmission of HPV, as the condom may not completely cover the infected area.

HPV is the most prevalent sexually transmitted infection in Canada. There are more than 100 different types of HPV with at least 40 that can cause genital warts and cancers such as cervical cancer.

About the SOGC

The SOGC is one of Canada's oldest national specialty organizations. Established in 1944, the Society's mission is to promote excellence in the practice of obstetrics and gynaecology and to advance the health of women through leadership, advocacy, collaboration, outreach and education. The SOGC represents obstetricians/gynaecologists, family physicians, nurses, midwives and allied health professionals working in the field of sexual reproductive health. For more information, visit www.sogc.org.