Circumcision provides partial HPV protection

By ACSH Staff — January 10, 2011

We have known for many years that cervical cancer is a sexually transmitted disease (STD), but it wasn’t until recently that we discovered that the human papillomavirus (HPV) was the main infectious cause. While vaccines against HPV have been developed, many women in developing nations don’t have realistic access to them, and cervical cancer remains the second most common cancer killer in women worldwide. But recent findings suggest that male circumcision may offer some protection [1] for the female partners of HPV-infected men. In a study [2] published in The Lancet Thursday, researchers found that the wives and girlfriends of circumcised men in Uganda had a 28 percent lower rate of HPV infection during the two year observation period compared to those of uncircumcised men. The study authors caution, however, that the protection is only partial, and they recommend safe sex practices, such as use of condoms.

ACSH’s Dr. Gilbert Ross believes that this is an important study that allows us to “add HPV to the list of known sexually transmitted pathogens whose transmission can be reduced by circumcision.”

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