Study reports on effectiveness of HPV vaccine

By ACSH Staff — March 6, 2014

The United States is trailing the rest of the world in terms of HPV vaccination rates. As we have written recently, according to the CDC, vaccination rates among girls are only at 33 percent. The rate among boys is even lower. The American Academy of Family Physicians, the American Academy of Pediatrics, The American College of Immunization Action Coalition and the CDC issued a joint statement earlier this month urging physicians to strongly recommend this vaccination, especially for adolescent boys and girls. And they have good reason to be doing so, as a new study published in BMJ reports that the vaccine is very effective.

Researchers led by Dr. Elizabeth Crowe of the University of Queensland in Brisbane, Australia used data from the HPV vaccination program targeting 12 and 13-year old girls, which began in April 2007. This program resulted in vaccination rates in schools of 84 percent for one dose, 79 percent for two doses and 70 percent for all three doses. Rates of vaccination in the community were 64 percent, 53 percent and 33 percent respectively. The researchers looked at data from about 108,000 women four years following the implementation of the vaccination program. They specifically focused on two types of abnormal pap smears: high grade (a known precursor to cervical cancer), or other cases not meeting the definition of high-grade. From this analysis, they concluded that the vaccine effectiveness the percentage reduction in frequency of lesions was 46 percent for high-grade cervical abnormalities and 34 percent for other abnormalities.

Study authors add, Data on the effectiveness of partial vaccination against cervical abnormalities are limited, as such efficacy was not assessed in clinical trials. Although this analysis indicates that three vaccine doses are required for optimal protection, our data suggest reasonable effectiveness with fewer doses.

ACSH s Dr. Elizabeth Whelan said, We ve been saying over and over again, it s a tragedy that we have a vaccine that can prevent several types of cancer, and it s grossly under-utilized. Public health agencies should be pulling out all the stops to get young men and women vaccinated against HPV before they become sexually active.