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Clyde physician recommends HPV vaccine for girls to ward off cancer

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Written by Robin Matthews Guest Columnist

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The American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists represents 56,000 OBGYNs and other partners in women's health. To learn more about this and other important issues concerning women's health,

In the U.S. alone, this year, almost 13,000 cases of invasive cervical cancer will be diagnosed, with more than 4,000 deaths due to this tragic and preventable cancer. An effective vaccination program against human papillomavirus — the cause of most cervical cancers — can greatly reduce the rates of cervical cancer in this country.

In recent months, the news has featured stories about a vaccine called Gardasil that was approved several years ago by the Food and Drug Administration for prevention of disease caused by HPV. The FDA has recently licensed a second vaccine, Cervarix, and both are shown to effectively prevent HPV infection.

Studies have shown that both vaccines are nearly 100 percent effective in protecting

females who have not already been exposed to the types of HPV covered by the vaccine. HPV infection is prevalent in the population and is sexually transmitted. There are many subtypes: Types 6 and 11 are commonly associated with genital warts. Types 16 and 18 are responsible for the vast majority of cervical cancers. Vaccination before the beginning of sexual activity most effectively prevents cervical cancer later in life.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that girls ages 11 or 12 receive the HPV vaccination, with a catch-up vaccination recommended for girls and women ages 13-26. Girls as young as 9 years old can be safely vaccinated. The American

Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists supports these recommendations. Certainly girls younger than 12 or 13 may not completely comprehend the facts and recommendations

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behind the vaccine, but this may also be true for a host of other recommended vaccines.

HPV vaccination is safe. Although any vaccine can pose a risk, the FDA and the CDC have extensively studied these vaccines and have concluded that they are both safe and effective.

Research by the Institute of Medicine found no links between immunization and some serious conditions that have raised concerns, including diabetes and autism. The vaccines do not cover every strain of HPV, and patients should still have regular screening pap smears.

Robin Matthews, MD, FACOG, is with Haywood Women's Medical Center at MedWest-Haywood in Clyde and is a member of the Western Carolina Medical Society.

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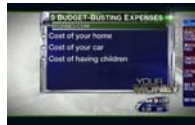
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