Students receiving the HPV vaccine (Gardasil) in Catholic schools

The Calgary Catholic School District Board of Trustees passed the following motion at its regularly scheduled public board meeting held October 24, 2012:

“THAT the Board of Trustees, in respecting parents as the primary educators of their children, and in light of recent medical studies and developments, as well as consultation with our Bishop, direct the Chief Superintendent to commence a consultation process with parents to receive their feedback with respect to offering the administration of the HPV vaccine in our district schools for the Board’s further consideration.”

This motion was prompted by recent correspondence between Bishop Henry and Board Chair Mary Martin. Please see the document attached.

Background:

• Alberta Health Services began offering the HPV vaccine to eligible students in 2008 as part of the school vaccination program. This particular vaccine has not been offered at Calgary Catholic schools, however other vaccination programs through Alberta Health Services are provided at our schools.

• We look to our Catholic leaders for moral and spiritual guidance and Bishop Henry indicated in 2008 he would not support the HPV vaccine being offered at Catholic schools. He is now supportive of CCSD proceeding with this parent consultation process.

• Regardless of whether or not we allow the vaccine to be administered at our schools, allowing children to receive vaccines is, and will continue to be, a parental decision. Parents always have the choice to opt out of the vaccine program for their child. Parents are currently able to access the vaccine at health clinics or through their family physician, at no additional cost for eligible students.

• It has been CCSD’s process to distribute a package to parents with information about the vaccine from Alberta Health, which outlines how parents can access the vaccine if they choose to do so. This is also provided in a number of languages.

• Our consultation process has evolved since the Board of Trustees made the original decision back in 2008. At the time, the Board made the best decision with the information it had available to it. The Board has directed administration to consult with our parents to ensure the right decision is made moving forward with the new information and research that has recently been made public. One of the new medical studies made public indicates that girls who had received the HPV vaccine were not associated with increased sexual activity. This study may be reviewed on-line in the American medical journal *Pediatrics* at http://pediatrics.aapublications.org/content/early/2012/10/10/peds.2012-1516.

Feedback:

As per the direction in the above-mentioned board motion, CCSD is seeking feedback related to the HPV vaccine being administered in schools.

1. What are your thoughts on the Catholic School District offering the HPV vaccine in our schools?
2. Other comments/questions?
Mrs. Mary Martin  
Chairperson Board of Trustees  
Catholic School Centre  
1000 - 5 Avenue SW  
Calgary, AB   T2P 4T9

Dear Mary,

First of all, I would like to congratulate the Trustees of Calgary Roman Catholic School District No.1 for passing the September 10, 2008 Motion:

“That the Board of Trustees direct the Chief Superintendent to advise school principals that we will not be offering the HPV Vaccine in our Catholic schools, based on the moral guidance of our Bishop and that they provide to parents, letters from the Alberta bishops as well as information regarding opportunities for parents who so choose to have the vaccine administered without cost.”

This decision was not made in haste, but only after much prayer, consultation, study and debate. I continue to think that it is the right and prudent course of action to take.

Secondly, I would like to review and briefly comment on a number of related items:

1. We believe that parents must decide whether or not their child is to be vaccinated against the HPV virus. We encourage parents to be fully informed about the medical facts of the Gardasil vaccine and all the related issues.

2. As many as 30 to 40 percent of eligible Canadian girls are not being immunized against the sexually transmitted disease that can cause cervical cancer. We are left to ponder a wide range of possible explanations.

3. Researchers at Kaiser Permanente studied 1,398 girls in the state of Georgia who had been given the vaccine and 905 who had not, over a three-year period. The group that had been vaccinated did not show increased rates of seeking contraceptive advice, having a pregnancy test or getting pregnant, or being diagnosed with a sexually transmitted disease. This is good news. However, the nature and results of the study may need to be further examined.

People have been inclined already to read into these results. Our claim has never been, despite the characterization of our opinion, “being vaccinated against cervical cancer makes girls more promiscuous.”

What we have repeatedly said is: that we should be dealing with causes, not just consequences; our youth have to be educated about the nature of human sexuality and Catholic moral teaching; informed about risky behaviour to their spiritual, emotional, moral and physical health, and
sexually transmitted diseases; and that we do not want to send any mixed signals about pre-marital sexual activity.

4. The HPV infection is common - 70% of adults will have HPV at some point in their lives. The infection often clears on its own within two years. For some, however, the infection can become chronic, leading to cervical changes, and possibly cancer. Further research is needed.

Maurie Markman, at the Cancer Treatment Centre of America in Philadelphia, on September 24, 2012 published in PubMed the following Abstract: “It will likely be more than 20 years before there is unequivocal evidence available that HPV vaccination decreases the incidence of invasive cervical cancer. However, existing data strongly suggests that as many as 440,000 cervical cancer cases and 220,000 deaths due to this malignancy will be prevented with the establishment of an effective worldwide HPV immunization program.”

Thirdly, I support our current policy and practice but I am also on record as holding that to vaccinate is not an inherently evil action but rather a partial prophylaxis. However, given all of the above, and the lack of a consistent policy and practice by Catholic school districts in our province, concerns, differences of opinion, divisions and threats of legal action, I would like to suggest that we seek the counsel of our Parent School Councils as to whether or not they continue to support the course of action outlined in the 2008 motion or would they advise us to offer the vaccine in our Catholic schools.

Wishing you all the best, I remain,

Sincerely yours in Christ,

* F. B. Henry
Bishop of Calgary.

cc. All Trustees
   Mr. Gary Strother
HPV vaccine in Catholic schools – FAQs

Who is eligible to receive the HPV vaccine?
Initiated in 2008 by Alberta Health, all girls entering Grade 5 are eligible to receive the vaccine. The Calgary Catholic School District (CCSD) assists Alberta Health Services (AHS) in distributing information regarding this vaccination; however, the vaccination is not available at CCSD schools during the scheduled vaccination clinics.

The decision to permit eligible girls to receive this inoculation rests solely with parents/guardians, and the vaccination can be accessed free of charge at AHS locations. Information about how to access the vaccine is provided in a package to parents of eligible girls. The package includes the location of clinics and information about the medical advantages and risks of the GARDASIL HPV vaccine so that informed decisions can be made from a health perspective.

Families that would like their daughter to obtain the vaccine but cannot transport them to a clinic or their doctor may be eligible for transportation assistance through the school. Only families that meet the criteria based on their inability to provide transportation will be considered. Please contact your school principal to discuss your eligibility.

Where can my daughter receive the HPV vaccine?
All girls entering Grade 5 are eligible to receive the HPV vaccine. Calgary Catholic School District (CCSD) assists Alberta Health Services (AHS) in distributing information regarding this vaccination; however, the vaccination is not available at CCSD schools during the scheduled vaccination clinics. Parents/guardians of eligible Grade 5 girls will receive an information package in September that outlines locations to obtain the vaccine. Please visit http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/services.asp?pid=service&rid=1026220 for more information.

What is HPV?
Human Papillomavirus (HPV) is a very common infection that is passed through sexual contact. Certain types of HPV infection cause almost all cases of cervical cancer. Visit Alberta Health’s website at http://www.health.alberta.ca/health-info/imm-hpv.html for more information about HPV. Additional information is also available at http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/services.asp?pid=service&rid=1026220.

What is the HPV vaccine?
As stated by Alberta Health, GARDASIL HPV vaccine was licensed in Canada in July 2006 for use in girls and women nine to 26 years of age. The vaccine provides protection from four types of HPV including types 16 and 18 which have been linked to about 70% of cervical cancer. The other two types, 6 and 11, cause about 90% of genital warts. Please visit Alberta Health’s website at http://www.health.alberta.ca/health-info/imm-hpv.html for more information.

Why does the Calgary Catholic School District not offer the vaccine in its schools?
Alberta Health Services began offering the GARDASIL vaccine to eligible students several years ago. CCSD looks to our Catholic leaders for moral and spiritual guidance. The Catholic Bishops of Alberta have indicated they do not support the GARDASIL vaccine being offered at Catholic schools. This continues to be the direction provided to us on this issue, although Bishop Henry is now supportive of CCSD proceeding with this parent consultation process. Some very important moral and spiritual concerns
have been raised about how this fits within our Catholic faith. Our commitment as Catholic educators is to provide our students with an understanding that human sexuality is a gift from God to be protected and cherished.

The decision to allow children to receive vaccines is a parental decision and parents are still able to access the vaccine at health clinics or through their family physician, at no additional cost for eligible students. Each year, CCSD distributes an information package to parents with information about the vaccine from Alberta Health, which outlines how parents can access the vaccine if they choose to do so. This will be provided in a number of languages.

**Does the HPV vaccine promote increased sexual activity in girls who receive the vaccine?**
The conclusion reached in a recent medical study in the American journal *Pediatrics* is that the HPV vaccine was not associated with increased sexual activity. Please visit the American medical journal *Pediatrics* at [http://pediatrics.aapublications.org/content/early/2012/10/10/peds.2012-1516](http://pediatrics.aapublications.org/content/early/2012/10/10/peds.2012-1516) for more information.

**What is the policy of other Catholic school boards with respect to allowing the administration of the HPV vaccine in schools?**
Currently, approximately half of Alberta Catholic school boards allow the HPV vaccine to be administered in their schools. In Saskatchewan, all Catholic school boards allow it in their schools. In Ontario, our information is that all but two Catholic school boards allow it in their schools.

**What information is there showing the difference in vaccination rates between girls receiving them in-school and girls receiving them at community clinics?**
In September 2011, Alberta Health Services conducted a quantitative analysis of the HPV vaccination rates by comparing the two delivery models for the vaccine. The analysis showed that the delivery models made a difference in HPV vaccination completion rates and created inequities for health protection and disease prevention based on socioeconomic status. Girls living in socioeconomic deprived neighbourhoods were much more likely to be immunized if they attended schools that had an in-school HPV vaccination program. Please see the Alberta Health Services information at [http://www.cssd.ab.ca/files/parent_resources/hpv/HPV_study.pdf](http://www.cssd.ab.ca/files/parent_resources/hpv/HPV_study.pdf) (also attached in this package).
September 2012

Dear Parents/Guardians of Grade 5 Girls:

Re: Access to HPV Vaccine

HPV (Human Papillomavirus) vaccine is provided to Grade 5 girls at no cost as part of the routine vaccination program in Alberta. The HPV vaccine prevents most cases of cervical cancer and is most effective when provided prior to exposure to HPV. The HPV vaccine is offered to girls only through the publicly-funded vaccination program in Alberta. Boys cannot receive the HPV vaccine through this program currently. The vaccination series consists of three doses.

Your school district has advised Alberta Health Services - Calgary Zone that we cannot provide this vaccine at the school that your Grade 5 daughter attends. However, we are able to send information home to you through your daughter’s school to advise you about the vaccine and where it will be available should you wish your daughter to receive it. Please see the HPV vaccine pamphlet accompanying this letter for more information about this vaccine.

HPV vaccine will be available at no cost for Grade 5 girls attending schools where vaccine cannot be provided. Please book an appointment at a Community Health Centre or Public Health Office by calling the clinic of your choice listed below. You must accompany your daughter to the clinic to provide parental/guardian consent for HPV vaccination if you wish her to receive this vaccine. Please bring your Alberta Health Care card, and your child’s vaccination history information.

More information about HPV and HPV vaccine is available at https://myhealth.alberta.ca/health/medications/pages/conditions.aspx?hwId=zb1250 or on the Alberta Health website at www.health.alberta.ca/health-info/imm-HPV.html. If you have additional questions about the vaccine, please contact one of the Community Health Centres or Public Health Offices listed below.

All Albertans with questions or concerns related to health, or wishing to learn more about health topics including immunizations, can call Health Link Alberta and speak to a registered nurse, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, toll free at 1-866-408-LINK (5465). To help meet the needs of Alberta’s diverse populations, Health Link Alberta also provides access to translators in up to 120 languages. These translators will quickly (within two minutes) become a part of a three-way conversation including the caller and Health Link Alberta staff.

Sincerely,

Dr. Judy MacDonald
Medical Officer of Health
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community Health Centre (CHC)/Public Health Office</th>
<th>Phone number if Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Airdrie</td>
<td>403-912-8400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>604 Main St. S. T2B 3K7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cochrane</td>
<td>403-851-6130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 Grande Boulevard W. T4C 2B9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acadia</td>
<td>403 944-7200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Calgary</td>
<td>403-955-1250</td>
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<tr>
<td>Northwest</td>
<td>403-943-9700</td>
</tr>
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<td>Shaganappi</td>
<td>403-944-7373</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheldon Chumir</td>
<td>403-955-1250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Calgary</td>
<td>403-943-9500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thornhill</td>
<td>403-944-7500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Village Square</td>
<td>403-944-7000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Human Papillomavirus Vaccine

Important Information

Call your local public health office

For more Information

Changes to the cervix

Early detection of pre-cancerous and cancers

screening is still recommended for women including those who

have received the HPV vaccine.

No cervical cancer screening is still

necessary after the virus is cleared.

The future?

Cancer screening (Pap tests) in

will the vaccine replace cervical

screening?

For girls, the vaccine is

Received HPv vaccine on your local health unit or local health unit if your

has completed the series at age 11, 12 or 13 years of

age. Please discuss the HPv vaccine with

health care provider and discuss the risks and benefits of vaccination with

a licensed health care professional if you have

HPv vaccine.

NOTE: ASV (e.g. GSK) is not recommended

for vaccination of girls under the age of

16 years of age. A waiver of the age of

16 years of age is required to receive the vaccine.

By the time this receipt is received, the vaccine

has been administered. It is important to verify

the date of vaccination on the receipt.

What should you do if your

daughter has a reaction to HPv?
What is the vaccine? HPv vaccine is a collection of vaccines that prevent HPv, which are responsible for several cancers and diseases. The vaccine is recommended for people aged 9 to 26 years old.

What are the side effects of HPV vaccine? Side effects are generally mild and include soreness, redness, and swelling at the injection site. Some people may also experience headaches or fatigue.

Who should receive HPV vaccine? HPV vaccine is recommended for all girls aged 9 to 11 years old. It is also recommended for boys aged 9 to 11 years old and those aged 12 to 26 years old.

How effective is the vaccine? The efficacy of HPV vaccine is 95%, with 100% protection against high-risk types of HPV.

Will HPV vaccine prevent certain cancers? HPV vaccine can prevent certain cancers, including cervical, anal, and vaginal cancers. It can also reduce the risk of developing certain types of low-grade and high-grade cervical dysplasia.

What are the symptoms of HPV? Symptoms of HPV infection can include genital warts, dysplasia, and cancer.

HPV infection is very common, with over 80% of people infected with HPV at some point in their lives. However, most HPV infections are asymptomatic and do not lead to cancer.
October 30, 2012

Mr. Gary Strother  
Chief Superintendent  
Calgary Catholic District Board  
Catholic School Centre  
1000 5th Avenue SW  
Calgary AB T2P 4T9

Dear Mr. Strother:

**Board Review of Human Papillomavirus Immunization**

I read with interest the brief article in Thursday’s Herald that your Board will be engaging in a discussion with parents of children attending Catholic schools about vaccination against the Human Papillomavirus (HPV) in the school setting. I applaud your decision to undertake this review, and wish to offer to you any assistance that I can.

One of the mandates of Alberta Health Services is to be a trusted source of evidence-based information about health matters and health services. As Medical Officer of Health, the mandate extends to me to be a point source for matters related to public health, including disease and injury prevention, as well as vaccination.

I have attached for you a summary of the findings of research we conducted in Calgary that demonstrated that 75% of girls who had the option to receive the vaccine in school completed the 3 dose course, compared to 36% of those accessing the vaccine through clinic appointment. Of particular concern was the finding that this gap between clinic and school delivery was most marked for girls from lower socioeconomic status neighbourhoods.

Should you need documentation regarding the HPV vaccine itself (including efficacy, safety and cost), evidence pertaining to program delivery approaches, or simply a medical expert to respond to specific questions that you and the Board members may have, I welcome the engagement. This extends to assisting with your drafting of information that will be sent home to parents, pertaining to their participation in the HPV review.

Briefly, I would like to summarize relevant points about the vaccine:

- Continuing experience with the vaccine since its wide introduction confirms both its safety and effectiveness in developing protection against infection with the virus, and protection against cervical changes that are precursors to cancer;
• Vaccine administration in a school setting is the most cost-effective and equitable means of delivery;

• There is no evidence to suggest that girls who receive the vaccine are more likely to initiate sexual relations than those that are not vaccinated.

I look forward to hearing from you, and being of whatever service to you that I can. Please feel free to contact me by telephone or email, whichever is most convenient for you.

Yours sincerely,

[Signature]

Richard Musto, MD, FRCPC
Medical Officer of Health
Calgary Zone

Enclosure
Factors associated with Human Papillomavirus (HPV) Vaccination in Calgary: 2008-2011
September 2011

Background

The Alberta Human Papillomavirus (HPV) Immunization Program offers a vaccine that can prevent two types of HPV that cause approximately 70% of all cases of cervical cancer and 90% of genital warts. This vaccine is offered free of charge to all girls in Grade 5, and until 2012, to all girls in Grade 9. The Calgary Catholic School District voted in September 2008 to not allow the Alberta HPV Immunization Program on school premises. In addition, some private schools in Calgary do not provide the HPV vaccine on their school premises. Alberta Health Services provides alternate access to the HPV vaccine for students in these schools through parent appointments at neighbourhood Community Health Centres. Other schools in Calgary provide access to the HPV vaccine for their students on school premises in conjunction with the Hepatitis B vaccination program.

Early analysis of the vaccination rates in Calgary indicated significant differences in the uptake of the vaccine in the two different delivery models: the “in-school” program and the “community” program. It has been suggested that vaccine uptake may be associated with parental socioeconomic status (SES).

Purpose

The purpose of this analysis was to quantify differences in the HPV vaccination rates of Calgary students between:

1. the two vaccine delivery models, and
2. neighbourhood socioeconomic status for students within each of the two vaccine delivery models.

Methods

Data and Analysis

The Calgary Zone Public Health database was used for analysis. Individual data for all grade 5 and grade 9 students in the Calgary Zone for school years 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 and grade 5 students in 2008-2009 was used. Data included: postal code, school type, delivery system, Hepatitis B vaccination status, and number of HPV vaccine doses received. SES was measured using a material deprivation index1. Each student was assigned a category of SES based on their home postal code. The odds of being vaccinated in each of the vaccine delivery models and the different categories of SES was calculated.

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Results

HPV vaccination completion rates were 75% for students with an “in-school” program versus 36% for students in schools with a “community” program. A girl attending a school with vaccine services “in-school” was significantly more likely to receive the HPV vaccine than a girl in a school with a “community” vaccine program (Odds Ratio = 4.8, 5.3).

A girl’s neighbourhood SES significantly affected the likelihood of being HPV vaccinated depending on which delivery system was available to her. Girls attending schools with a “community” vaccination program and who reside in low SES neighbourhoods were significantly less likely to be vaccinated for HPV compared to girls from high SES neighbourhoods. (Odds Ratio = 0.67, 95% confidence interval = 0.67, 0.89).

The opposite was true for girls attending schools with an “in-school” program. In these schools, girls from low SES neighbourhoods were significantly more likely to receive the HPV vaccination than girls from high SES neighbourhoods. (Odds Ratio = 1.7; 95% confidence interval 1.5, 1.9).

Conclusions

Delivery systems make a difference in HPV vaccination completion rates and create inequities for health protection and disease prevention based on socioeconomic status.

Girls living in socioeconomically deprived neighbourhoods are much more likely to be immunized if they attend schools that have an “in-school” program.

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### Number and Percentage of Students with each HPV Vaccination Status Category, Stratified by Neighbourhood SES Category

#### “Community” Vaccine Program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HPV Vaccination Status</th>
<th>Neighbourhood SES Category</th>
<th>1 (Highest SES)</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5 (Lowest SES)</th>
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<tr>
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<td>1,400 (50.7%)</td>
<td>1,220 (49.3%)</td>
<td>830 (54.3%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Initiated</td>
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<td>342 (12.4%)</td>
<td>246 (10.4%)</td>
<td>198 (11.8%)</td>
<td>129 (11.9%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Complete</td>
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<td>1,021 (37.0%)</td>
<td>902 (38.1%)</td>
<td>657 (39.0%)</td>
<td>367 (33.8%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>2,763 (100%)</td>
<td>2,368 (100%)</td>
<td>1,685 (100%)</td>
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#### “In-School” Vaccine Program

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<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
<td>1,931 (24.4%)</td>
<td>1,308 (22.8%)</td>
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<td>587 (18.7%)</td>
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<tr>
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<td>196 (2.5%)</td>
<td>174 (3.0%)</td>
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<tr>
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<td>5,777 (73.1%)</td>
<td>4,248 (74.1%)</td>
<td>3,576 (73.7%)</td>
<td>2,409 (77.0%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>7,904 (100%)</td>
<td>5,730 (100%)</td>
<td>4,855 (100%)</td>
<td>3,132 (100%)</td>
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### Percentage of Students With Each Vaccination Status Category, Stratified by Vaccination Delivery Model and High or Low SES Category

![Percentage of Students With Each Vaccination Status Category](image)

Analysis and document completed by Population Health Innovation and Decision Support.

For more information contact: PHIDS@albertahealthservices.ca