

Announcement

## The Society of Gynecologic Oncologists statement on a cervix cancer vaccine

Cervix cancer affects more than 10,000 women and families each year in the United States and hundreds of thousands worldwide. An estimated 3700 US women lost their lives to this potentially preventable disease in 2005. This cancer disproportionately affects women during their childbearing years, resulting in childless couples or leaving behind motherless children. Poor and underserved minority women are especially at risk because of inadequate access to basic preventative tests and lack of health knowledge concerning cancer prevention. In the 30-year “War on Cancer,” prevention has often been cited as the loftiest goal with the greatest impact on the burden of disease. For cervix cancer, this goal is becoming a reality.

Research has identified the human papillomavirus (HPV) as the causative agent of most cervix cancers, with HPV 16 and 18 being the most common cancer-causing types. Because persistent HPV infection is the leading cause of cervix cancer and its precursors, research has focused on ways to prevent HPV infection. The Society of Gynecologic Oncologists (SGO) is responding to important breakthrough research that shows that cervix cancer can be prevented through vaccination.

Peer-reviewed manuscripts describing results from several large randomized clinical trials of prophylactic HPV vaccines are now available. Both major trials show dramatic efficacy in preventing HPV 16 and 18 infections, as well as efficacy in preventing precancerous cervical lesions. Combined studies include more than 6000 vaccinated children, adolescents, and adults, all without serious adverse events.

Although actual cancer events will not be measurable for several decades, HPV infection and the development of precancerous cervical lesions are appropriate surrogate biologic endpoints. Evidence shows that virus-like-particle (VLP)-based vaccines induce protective immunity to HPV 16 and 18 in 90–100% of vaccinated individuals, thereby protecting individuals (or their partners) from the most feared consequence of persistent infection—cervix cancer.

The SGO endorses the concept of vaccination to prevent cervix cancer and applauds the efforts of the responsible federal agencies to promptly and thoroughly review the scientific evidence supporting vaccination to prevent cervix cancer. SGO is committed to participating in the education process necessary to ensure the success of a cervix cancer vaccine program. SGO encourages healthcare providers to prepare for implementation of the broadest application of the vaccine (within guidelines) to ensure maximum protection against cervix cancer in the United States.