



Paediatric Society of Ghana

SENSITISATION WORKSHOP ON GHANA'S HPV
VACCINE INTRODUCTION
16TH SEPTEMBER 2025

**Addressing Myths and Misconception of HPV
vaccination**

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OUTLINE

- Objectives
- Summary
- Definitions
- Myths
- Misconceptions
- Solutions



Objectives

- By the end of this presentation, participants should gain knowledge on:
 - ❖ common myths and misconceptions regarding HPV vaccines
 - ❖ Strategies to address the same will also be shared



SUMMARY



FACTS above FICTION



BENEFITS above RISKS



PUBLIC HEALTH above INDIVIDUALS



RESEARCH above SPECULATIONS



TEAMWORK above DIVISION



Must guide our steps to demystify myths and misconceptions regarding HPV vaccines



Definitions

- A myth is an often traditional story that may explain some aspect of the natural or social world
- A misconception is a false or inaccurate idea that is based on faulty thinking, flawed understanding, or misinformation



LACK OF KNOWLEDGE-My people perish

- **Lack of awareness of the availability 55% of Ghanaian women with proven cervical cancer were not aware of a vaccine for prevention**
- **Lacked awareness of HPV transmission (95.9%)**

Attitudes and knowledge about HPV vaccination among Ghanaian women with cervical cancer

First published: 13 February 2023 <https://doi.org/10.1002/rfc2.24>

Knowledge of Human Papillomavirus, Risk Factors and Screening for Cervical Cancer Among Women in Ghana. doi: [10.1177/10732748251323765](https://doi.org/10.1177/10732748251323765)



HPV VACCINE CAUSES SERIOUS SIDE EFFECTS

- Public and professional misconceptions about serious side effects of HPV vaccines:
 - infertility,
 - ovarian failure,
 - autoimmune diseases
 - and cancer

- Human Papillomavirus (HPV) Vaccine Safety <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccine-safety/vaccines/hpv.html>



HPV infection only affects sexually active individuals

Many—including healthcare professionals—believe only sexually active women or girls are at risk. (misconception)

HPV can be transmitted through non-sexual means (toilet seats, use of enema bulbs)

Immaculate infection: the riddle of HPV in Ghana's nuns <https://www.gavi.org/vaccineswork/immaculate-infection-riddle-hpv-ghanas-nuns>



HPV VACCINATION IS ONLY FOR FEMALES

Initial Target Group

HPV vaccination was initially targeted primarily at females to prevent cervical cancer.

Universal Recommendation

HPV vaccination is now recommended for all genders to prevent HPV-related cancers effectively.

- Evidence from four RCTs (including 7008 male participants) support the efficacy of the quadrivalent HPV vaccine in preventing genital warts and persistent HPV infection in HPV-naïve men
- Efficacy of human papillomavirus vaccines in the prevention of male genital diseases: a systematic review
- <https://doi.org/10.1111/bju.16692>



False Perceptions of Vaccine Impact on Sexual Behaviour

- Some believe HPV vaccination leads to early or promiscuous sexual activity, which is a widespread misconception.

Research Findings

- Scientific studies consistently find no link between HPV vaccination and changes in sexual behaviour among recipients.

- Popelsky BK, Asare M, Agyei-Baffour P, Koranteng A, Commeh ME. Assessing Attitudes and Beliefs Toward HPV Vaccination among Ghanaian Parents with Unvaccinated Adolescents: Application of Multi-Theory Model of Behavior Change. *Asian Pac J Cancer Prev.* 2022 Jun 1;23(6):1901-1911



CERVICAL CANCER CANNOT BE PREVENTED BY VACCINES

HPV Transmission Mode

- Low awareness of the link between HPV and cervical cancer exists
- 80% did not know about the HPV vaccine
- Cervical cancer prevention methods: awareness and use among urban Ghanaian women in Cape Coast, West Africa.
<https://doi.org/10.3332/ecancer.2023.1626>



Vaccination is unnecessary if there are no symptoms

Misinformation

- including the idea that HPV vaccination is only needed after symptoms or sexual debut

- Kutz, JM., Rausche, P., Gheit, T. *et al.* Barriers and facilitators of HPV vaccination in sub-saharan Africa: a systematic review. *BMC Public Health* **23**, 974 (2023). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-023-15842-1>



Cultural and Religious Misconceptions

- Misinterpretations of religious texts or teachings can lead to the rejection of the vaccine based on moral objections or beliefs that the vaccine is unnatural. (Bill Gates-population theory)
- **Acceptance of HPV vaccination in boys among mothers from selected churches in Accra, Ghana. <https://www.springermedizin.de/bmc-public-health/9483780>**



ADDRESSING MYTHS AND MISCONCEPTIONS



Community Education and Outreach Approaches

Tailored Education Programs

Customized education initiatives help address specific community concerns effectively.

Engaging Communities

– Active community involvement enhances trust and acceptance of HPV vaccination.

Improved Vaccination Understanding

– Focused outreach increases knowledge and acceptance of HPV immunization benefits.



Role of Healthcare Providers and Local Leaders

Advocacy for Vaccination

Healthcare providers actively promote vaccination to improve community health and prevent disease outbreaks.

Accurate Information Dissemination

Local leaders and healthcare professionals share reliable vaccination information to counter misinformation.

Building Community Trust

Trusted local figures foster trust in health initiatives, encouraging vaccination acceptance among residents.



Collaboration with healthcare professionals

Building Trust with Providers

Partnering with trusted healthcare providers boosts public confidence in vaccination campaigns.

Consistent Health Messaging

Collaboration ensures uniform communication, reinforcing vaccine benefits and safety to the public.

Professional Endorsement

Healthcare professional support encourages vaccination uptake through authoritative recommendations.



Utilising media and public campaigns

Social Media Outreach

Social media platforms enable rapid spread of accurate HPV vaccination messages to diverse audiences worldwide.

Television Campaigns

Television broadcasts reach broad audiences with engaging HPV vaccine awareness content and positive stories.

Print Media Distribution

Print media such as newspapers and flyers effectively distribute factual information about HPV vaccination locally and regionally.

DIFFERENTIATED SERVICE DELIVERY APPROACH



BUILDING TRUST THROUGH TRANSPARENT COMMUNICATION

Honest Dialogue Importance

Open and honest communication is essential to build public trust in vaccine information.

Vaccine Benefits and Risks

Clear explanation of both vaccine benefits and risks supports informed public decision-making.

Encouraging Informed Choices

Transparent communication empowers individuals to make well-informed vaccination decisions.



Strategies for effective community outreach

Targeted Workshops

Conduct workshops tailored to community needs to engage and educate effectively.

Informational Materials

Use clear and accessible materials to provide important information to the community.

Culturally Sensitive Communication

Communicate respectfully by considering cultural differences and community concerns.



Addressing religious and ethical concerns

Open Respectful Dialogue

Engaging communities through respectful conversations promotes understanding and addresses vaccine concerns effectively.

Clarifying Misconceptions

Clarifying moral and health misconceptions reassures communities about vaccine safety and intent.



Facilitating dialogue within faith communities

Role of Religious Leaders

Religious figures lead workshops to promote informed conversations about vaccination within faith communities.

Reducing Stigma

Dialogue helps reduce stigma around vaccination, fostering acceptance and trust among believers.

Fostering Supportive Attitudes

Faith-based discussions encourage positive attitudes toward vaccination and health practices.



CERVICAL CANCER SURVIVORS AS ADVOCATES

- **Sharing personal story and journey**
- **Loved ones to share their support and challenges**
- **Sharing preventive strategies for her loved ones to avoid her predicament**



CONCLUSIONS/TAKE HOME

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- BENEFITS above RISKS
- PUBLIC HEALTH above INDIVIDUALS
- RESEARCH above SPECULATIONS
- TEAMWORK above DIVISION

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THANK YOU

- Q/A