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Federation of Medical Women of Canada
Fédération des femmes médecins du Canada

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

WOMEN SHOULD HAVE OPTION TO CHOOSE HPV VACCINATION

Federation of Medical Women calls for choices on International Women's Day

OTTAWA (Ontario) – March 6, 2007 – According to the Federation of Medical Women of Canada, every Canadian girl and woman should have the option to choose whether or not to protect themselves against HPV diseases like cervical cancer and genital warts. As it now stands, only those who can afford the HPV vaccine have a real choice.

The National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) recently recommended that all Canadian girls and women aged 9 to 26 should be routinely vaccinated with GARDASIL™ to protect them against the Human Papillomavirus (HPV), the primary cause of cervical cancer. Studies have shown that GARDASIL™ is 100 per cent effective at preventing disease from the HPV types that account for 70 per cent of all cervical cancers and 90 per cent of genital warts.¹

“International Women's Day is the perfect time to talk about choices for women and we want the Ontario government to make sure this new HPV vaccine is an option for women in the province,” said Dr. Gail Beck, President of the Federation of Medical Women of Canada. “Minister George Smitherman took a strong leadership position in favour of immunization when he took office after the last election. The roadmap is there, we just need the Ontario government to show leadership once again.”

HPV strikes women in the prime of their lives

HPV is the primary cause of cervical cancer and is linked to vaginal, vulvar and anal cancers.² Three in four (75 per cent) Canadians will get at least one HPV infection in their lifetime,³ while 44.8 per cent of women aged 20-24 in the United States are currently infected with HPV.⁴ Cervical cancer is the second most common cancer in Canadian women aged 20-44 after breast cancer.⁵

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“Too many women are struck by HPV-related diseases in the prime of their lives and our governments should be concerned about this important loss of human potential,” said Dr. Gail Beck. “To make changes that really matter, the federal and provincial governments need to show true leadership and this new HPV vaccine is an excellent opportunity for them to show Canadians how they can work together for the benefit of girls and women across the country for years to come.”

Last fall, 24-year-old Liz Ellwood discovered she had cervical cancer and underwent a trachelectomy, a procedure that removes most of the cervix but allows the patient to conceive and carry children. After learning how easy it is to prevent what she is now going through, Ms. Ellwood became an HPV vaccine advocate.

“If I got cervical cancer, anyone can. The HPV vaccine could save others from the ordeal I went through,” said Liz Ellwood. “If there is something available that could prevent cancer, then it should be made available to as many people as possible. In fact, every Canadian school girl should be vaccinated and every sexually active woman should have this option as well.”

About the FMWC

The Federation of Medical Women of Canada (FMWC) is a national organization committed to the professional, social and personal advancement of women physicians and to the promotion of the well-being of women both in the medical profession and in society at large. Since its formation in 1924, the FMWC has acted as a guardian for women physicians and medical students, giving loans, mentoring and networking opportunities, and acting as an advocate for women physicians and women’s health in society. Most of the women physician leaders in Canada have received their training and support through membership in FMWC, which is an independent nation member of Medical Women’s International Association. For more information, visit www.fmwc.ca.

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References

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- ² University of Florida Shands Cancer Centre Web site.
(Accessed at <http://www.ufscc.ufl.edu/Professional/cancernews.aspx?section=cancernews&id=32590>)
- ³ Health Canada, *It's Your Health HPV* Web site.
(Accessed at http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/iyh-vsv/diseases-maladies/hpv-vph_e.html)
- ⁴ Eileen F. Dunne et al. Prevalence of HPV Infection Among Females in the United States. *JAMA*. 2007;297;813-819.
- ⁵ Loraine D. Marrett, Jennifer Froot, Diane Nishri and Anne-Marie Ugnat. Cancer incidence in young adults in Canada: preliminary results of a cancer surveillance project. *Chronic Diseases in Canada*. Spring 2002. Volume 23 Number 2 (Accessed at http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/publicat/cdic-mcc/23-2/b_e.html).

