

IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Nine out of ten young Canadian women are NOT vaccinated against cervical cancer

New research shows lack of awareness and cost negatively impacts vaccination rates

Toronto, Ontario – October 21, 2010 – Young Canadian women are leaving themselves vulnerable to cervical cancer because they are unaware of the benefits of vaccination and feel the cost of the vaccine is prohibitive, according to a survey of young women and mothers released today.

Lack of Awareness

- 68% of young Canadian women between the ages of 18 and 25 have not received the cervical cancer vaccination because they do not know enough about it.
- 79% of young Canadian women between the ages of 18 and 25 say they would get a vaccine if it (the vaccine) was proven to prevent cancer.

Cost is Prohibitive

- 51% of young Canadian women between the ages of 18 and 25, who do not have a drug plan to help pay for the vaccination, say that cost is a significant barrier to getting the vaccine.
- 61% of moms, who do not have a drug plan to help pay for the vaccination, also claim cost to be a significant barrier to getting the vaccine for their daughters.

Recent survey results show nine out of ten young Canadian women between the ages of 18 and 25 **have not been vaccinated** against cervical cancer. The research is being released just before National Cervical Cancer Awareness Week (October 24 to 30, 2010).

“Young women are clearly not aware of how important it is to be vaccinated against this cancer,” said Dr. Joan Murphy, Head of the Division of Gynecologic Oncology at Princess Margaret Hospital in Toronto, co-Chair of the Society of Gynecologic Oncology of Canada’s Communities of Practice in Cervical Cancer Prevention and Control. “Physicians, like myself, who see these cases every day know that vaccination alongside regular Pap screening offers strong protection against cervical cancer which can be deadly.”

“Prevention of cervical cancer through vaccination availability and education directed to young Canadian women is critical. Barriers such as cost needs to be addressed” expressed Dr. Deborah Hellyer, President of the Federation of Medical Women of Canada.

Additional Findings

- 92% of young Canadian women between the ages of 18 and 25 agree if there was a way to prevent cancer, they would do it.
- 84% of moms with daughters between the ages of 18 and 25 would want them to get a vaccine if it (the vaccine) was proven to prevent cancer.
- 65% of young Canadian women between the ages of 18 and 25 who have not received the vaccine say they don't engage in behaviour that would put them at risk.

Annually, 1450 Canadian women will be diagnosed with cervical cancer, most under the age of 30, and 420 women will die due to the devastating effects of this disease.ⁱ This means, on average, that one Canadian woman will lose her life each day to cervical cancer. Among Canadian women aged 20 to 44, cervical cancer incidence ranks second only to breast cancer.ⁱⁱ

“The solution to this preventable cancer exists and cost should not be a barrier to accessing it. Cervical cancer vaccination should be available, free of charge, to all Canadian women who would benefit. Provinces and territories should ensure full funding and drug plans should be updated accordingly,” said Dr. Ahmed Ezzat, President of the Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada.

“This survey demonstrates that there is still a lack of knowledge about the role of HPV and the development of cervical cancer. The fact that nearly 20% of the young women have had an abnormal Pap is not a surprise, but shows the importance of considering adding vaccination to Pap testing. We have an opportunity to further reduce cervical cancer and abnormal Pap tests,” said Dr. James Bentley, Head Division of Gynecologic Oncology at Dalhousie University and Past President of the Society of Canadian Colposcopists.

The research also shows one-in-five young women in this age group have already had an abnormal Pap test. The Pap test is an effective, widely used method for early detection of abnormal cell changes on the cervix that, if left untreated, could develop into cervical cancer.

“Through vaccination and regular Pap screening the risk of developing cervical cancer is significantly reduced. It’s vitally important that we use these survey results as a means to educate women,” said Dr. Murphy.

The Society of Gynecologic Oncology of Canada (GOC), the Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada (SOGC), the Federation of Medical Women of Canada (FMWC) and The Society of Canadian Colposcopists (SCC) support the implementation of market research to assess public awareness, perceptions and behaviours related to important women’s health issues, such as cervical cancer and vaccination. The results of this survey provide valuable insight and will hopefully compel Canadian women to become more informed, get their Pap test and be vaccinated.

The survey was completed by Leger Marketing August 20 to 29, 2010 and was sponsored by GlaxoSmithKline Inc. It was conducted on-line and completed by 1,061 Canadian women 18 years of age or older. Specifically, 499 were young women between the ages of 18 and 25, and 562 respondents were mothers of daughters in that age category.

About The Society of Gynecologic Oncology of Canada (GOC)

The Society of Gynecologic Oncology of Canada (GOC) represents the only national forum and gathering point for all specialists trained in treating gynecological cancer. GOC has more than 200 members. Its membership comprises gynecologic oncologists, medical oncologists, radiation oncologists, pathologists, nurses, scientists, pharmacists, other allied health professionals, fellows-in-training and residents. For more information visit www.g-o-c.org.

About The Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada (SOGC)

The Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada (SOGC) is one of Canada’s oldest national specialty organizations. Established in 1944, the Society’s mission is to promote excellence in the practice of obstetrics and gynaecology and to advance the health of women through leadership, advocacy, collaboration, outreach and education. The SOGC represents obstetricians/gynaecologists, family physicians, nurses, midwives and allied health professionals working in the field of sexual reproductive health. For more information, visit www.sogc.org.

About The Federation of Medical Women of Canada (FMWC)

Established in 1924, 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. For more information, please visit: www.fmwc.ca.

About The Society of Canadian Colposcopists (SCC)

Founded in 1984, the Society of Canadian Colposcopists' members include gynecologists, gynecologic-oncologists and family physicians. The SCC's mission is to advocate and promote the highest quality of care in the prevention, education and research, detection and treatment of benign and premalignant abnormalities of the lower genital tract. The SCC's vision is for all women in Canada to have equitable access to comprehensive programs for the prevention of lower genital tract malignancy. For more information, please visit www.colposcopycanada.org.

About GlaxoSmithKline Inc.

GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) is a leading research-based pharmaceutical company with a challenging and inspiring mission: to improve the quality of human life by enabling people to do more, feel better, and live longer. This mission gives GSK the purpose to develop innovative medicines, vaccines and healthcare solutions that help millions of people. GSK is consistently recognized as one of the 50 best employers in Canada and is a top 15 investor in Canadian research and development, contributing more than \$144 million in 2009 alone. With a proud tradition of charitable and community support, GSK is designated a Caring Company by Imagine Canada. Discover more at www.gsk.ca.

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i. The Canadian Cancer Society. Canadian Cancer Statistics 2009. Page 12.

ii Cancer in Young Adults in Canada 2006, Cancer Care Ontario and the Public Health Agency of Canada.