

Press Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

HPV Vaccines are not the answer!

The question is being raised of mass vaccination against the Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) for girls as young as nine years old. The Canadian Catholic Bioethics Institute thinks this is an inappropriate and unnecessary response in preventing girls from contracting this sexually transmitted virus, which can have serious consequences.

The best prevention of HPV and other STDs is to refrain from sexual activity until a couple is in a loving marital relationship, which presupposes real knowledge of each other. This is not “pie in the sky” and this is what should also be said in sex education, rather than relying on vaccines. Many young people do not pay attention to possible consequences of sexual activity, even when condoms are used, but many others do. Mass vaccination is also inappropriate for that reason alone.

Statistically, long term health and fertility prospects are best protected by monogamous relationships. The Catholic view is even broader, recognizing and advocating that physical, psychological, spiritual and emotional health are all best protected and promoted in marriage. The current rates of STDs, including AIDS, are increasing overall where young women are concerned, and this should make us reflect on the message about sexual activity that society is giving them.

Young people can see that they are not being deprived of sex for life. They are, rather, being asked to wait. Why? The marriage relationship is sacred and monogamy is still the best guarantee of sexual and emotional health for couples and their children. Premarital sexual activity can lead, among other things, to being infected with HPV, with the possible long term consequence of cervical cancer. Overall, there seem to be more harms than benefits in early sexual activity, especially when the long term effects are factored in.

The benefits of abstinence should be given a fair hearing. Mass vaccination perpetuates an acceptance by society that, “You’re going to do it anyway, so at least be protected”. This is unfair, and mitigates against young people taking responsibility for their own actions, which society expects of them in other situations. It also sends a clear signal of acceptance of early sexual activity itself.

Mass vaccination is an expensive proposition. The expense factor is, however, secondary in this case. If the HPV vaccination were truly necessary, because there would be no other way to prevent its contraction, say like the measles virus, then the expense perhaps should be met. But this is not the case: the virus can be prevented though refraining from sexual activity. This is a positive decision for girls and young women, ensuring prevention of disease at a young age, and improving their long term physical and emotional circumstances.

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