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Will Men Get Gardasil?

The Food and Drug Administration is considering whether to approve Gardasil for men. But the question is: Will men be willing to get a vaccine for mostly altruistic reasons?

A new study raises questions about that.

The vaccine protects against the human papillomavirus (HPV), the most common sexually transmitted infection. The virus causes genital warts in men and women and can increase the risk for relatively rare cancers, such as penile and anal cancer, in men. But the most significant health problem HPV causes is cervical cancer in women. Public health experts hope that if the vaccine is approved for men, it could reduce the toll of cervical cancer by reducing the spread of the the virus.

So Mary Gerend of Florida State University and a graduate student surveyed 356 male students, asking them to rate on a scale from 1 to 6 their likelihood of getting the vaccine--with 1 equaling "very unlikely" and 6 equaling "very likely."

The men who were told about the vaccine's potential benefits for their partners were no more likely to say they'd be interested in the vaccine than those who were just told about the benefits for themselves. Both groups had a mean score of just below 4, the researchers reported in the journal *Sexually Transmitted Diseases*. Even those who said they were in committed relationships were no more inclined to get the shots.

Now, the researchers noted that the survey involved college students between the ages of 18 and 20. So it's unclear what they mean by a "committed relationship" at that age. But the researchers say the findings suggest a more forceful education campaign will be needed if the vaccine's manufacturer, Merck, wins approval of the vaccine for men.


It's important to note that other studies have produced more promising results indicating that men might be more inclined to get the vaccine. If you want to read more about all this check out this story, "[A Vaccine Debate Once Focused on Sex Shifts as Boys Join the Target Market.](#)" I wrote recently about this subject.

By Rob Stein | June 4, 2009; 7:00 AM ET | [View or post comments](#) | Category: [Cancer](#), [Family Health](#), [Vaccinations](#), [Women's Health](#)
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Perhaps I'm not reading the item correctly, but I interpreted the information presented as indicating that most of the respondents were "likely" to get the vaccine (mean rank of those polled was just under 4). And if so, where's the story?

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and neck cancers.

Posted by: [lizbo](#) | June 5, 2009 8:28 AM

I work for Medicine Shoppe and thus far our pharmacists recommended that girls between 11 and 12 years of age receive the Human Papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine. The good news is that older adult women are also seeing benefits from the vaccine. For more information about Gardasil for men and women ask your local pharmacist.

Posted by: [imzmsi](#) | June 5, 2009 9:58 AM

I think the biggest market will be for boys, as a routine vaccination, and for gay men (there's already a strong demand there). While there are certainly some college-aged heterosexual men out there who are proactive about their own health, and others who care about their partners' health, I'd guess it's unlikely that most would go for the first shot, let alone the next two.

As a parent I'd be as likely to get a son vaccinated as a daughter, but in fact I've decided not to go that route at all as I have several concerns about the vaccine.

Sure, the majority of girls who've got it have done fine, but there seems to be some evidence that it is triggering autoimmune disease in susceptible individuals.

Then when I look at the efficacy, the potential side effects just aren't worth it. Merck's most recent data showed only a 17-45 percent efficacy against pre-cancerous cells; if, as seems likely, replacement diseases will move in as the many strains of HPV NOT covered by the vaccine fill the biological vacancy, then my daughters could remain largely unprotected.

I think it's interesting that (as per the other article) there's less ranting about the vaccine encouraging boys to be promiscuous (would they need encouragement LOL?)but the truth is that for the vast majority of parents who've chosen not to vaccinate, that was never an issue.

Posted by: [Kristin41](#) | June 5, 2009 12:18 PM

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