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WOMEN IN GOVERNMENT APPLAUDS FEDERAL ADVISORY GROUP'S NEW HPV VACCINE RECOMMENDATIONS

ACIP Recommends HPV Vaccine be Given Routinely to Girls Aged 11 and 12, Provided to All Other FDA-Approved Age Groups, and Be Included in Vaccines for Children Program

Washington, DC, June 29, 2006 --- Women In Government today applauded the federal Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) for helping to ensure that the recently FDA-approved vaccine for the human papillomavirus (HPV) – the cause of cervical cancer – becomes widely available in the fight against cervical cancer. The ACIP voted today to recommend that the HPV vaccine, made by Merck and known as Gardasil, be given routinely to girls aged 11 and 12, that it be provided to all other FDA-approved age groups, and that it be included in the federal Vaccines for Children Program, which provides free immunization to underinsured and uninsured children. The FDA approved the HPV vaccine earlier this month for girls and women between the ages of 9 and 26. The ACIP's guidelines are frequently used as the basis for insurance coverage decisions, medical guidelines and inclusion in other public health programs.

“ACIP's new recommendations are a huge step forward in making the HPV vaccine available to all recommended age groups, regardless of socioeconomic status,” said Susan Crosby, president of Women In Government, a non-profit, bi-partisan organization representing women state legislators. “Women In Government looks forward to educating our members about this complex issue to help them make informed policy decisions in their own states.”

Maryland State Senator Gloria Lawlah, who serves as chair of Women In Government's board of directors, noted in public comment at the ACIP meeting today, “I join many state legislators around the country who stand ready to support a public health effort that will ensure that all age-appropriate girls and women -- rich, poor, insured, uninsured, black, white, Hispanic or Asian – can receive the HPV vaccine.”

Gardasil has been shown in clinical trials to be 100 percent effective in preventing infection with the two types of HPV (16 and 18) that are responsible for approximately 70 percent of all cervical cancers. Clinical data also showed this HPV vaccine to be effective in targeting HPV types 6 and 11, which cause 90 percent of genital warts.

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HPV VACCINE/2

Ms. Crosby also emphasized that, even with an HPV vaccine, screening will still be necessary to target cervical cancer caused by those HPV types not covered by the vaccine and to reach women who do not receive the vaccine. “The HPV vaccine should become part of comprehensive cervical cancer prevention programs that also use advanced and medically appropriate screening methods, such as HPV testing,” said Ms. Crosby.

Incidence and mortality from cervical cancer in the United States have been reduced dramatically over the past 60 years, due to widespread use of the Pap test. However, research shows that the Pap test’s ability to detect cervical cancer or its early signs ranges from 51 to 85 percent, depending on the type of Pap test used. In 2003, the FDA approved a new screening test for HPV, which, when used in conjunction with a Pap test in women age 30 and older, increases the ability to identify women at risk for cervical cancer to almost 100 percent.

In 2004, Women In Government launched the “Challenge to Eliminate Cervical Cancer Campaign,” which mobilizes state legislators to educate women about HPV and cervical cancer and ensure that all age-appropriate females have access to advanced and appropriate prevention technologies. To date, 45 states have introduced legislation or resolutions targeting cervical cancer prevention and 39 states have enacted such measures.

About Cervical Cancer

Worldwide, cervical cancer is the second leading cancer-killer of women, with almost a quarter-million deaths each year. In the United States, the American Cancer Society estimates 9,710 women will be diagnosed with and more than 3,700 women will die of cervical cancer. According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, approximately 20 million people are currently infected with HPV, with 6.2 million new infections occurring annually and approximately 80 percent of sexually active women will be infected with HPV by age 50. For 90 percent of infected women, the virus is naturally cleared by the body and becomes undetectable within two years. However, persistent infection with “high-risk” types of HPV can cause cell changes that, untreated, can lead to cervical cancer.

About Women In Government

Women In Government is a national, 501(c)(3), non-profit, bi-partisan organization of women state legislators providing leadership opportunities, networking, expert forums and educational resources to address and resolve complex public policy issues. For more information, visit www.womeningovernment.org.

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