



Shaping a Strategy to Introduce HPV Vaccines in Peru

Formative Research Results from the *HPV Vaccines: Evidence for Impact* project

Cervical cancer kills more than a quarter million women each year—usually women in the prime of their productive lives—crippling families and weakening communities. At least 33,000 of these deaths occur in Latin America and the Caribbean.¹ New vaccines to prevent infection with the human papillomavirus (HPV), the primary cause of cervical cancer, can therefore have a marked impact in countries like Peru.

Project overview

Effort is required to prepare health systems and communities to accept and embrace any new health technology. Through our *HPV Vaccines: Evidence for Impact* project, PATH, in close collaboration with ministries of health and other partners, are piloting vaccine introduction in four countries: India, Peru, Uganda, and Vietnam. Together, we are generating evidence to help policymakers and planners in the developing world make informed decisions regarding vaccine introduction and financing. When combined with a comprehensive approach that includes screening and precancer treatment, evidence-based HPV vaccination programs could reduce developing-country cervical cancer deaths to the currently low levels observed in many industrialized countries.^{2,3}

This overview summarizes results from formative research in Peru regarding the health systems and policy context that will affect HPV vaccine introduction, as well as beliefs, values, attitudes, knowledge, and behaviors related to HPV, cervical cancer, and vaccination.

The formative research was designed to guide development of a vaccine delivery strategy, a communications strategy (for outreach to communities), and an advocacy strategy (for outreach to policymakers). As a next step, these strategies are being implemented and evaluated through a demonstration project in each country. The findings from the demonstration projects—anticipated in 2010—can then serve as an evidence base for governments deciding whether and how to incorporate HPV vaccination into a comprehensive cervical cancer prevention program.



Girls who received the HPV vaccine in Piura, Peru.

"We all have the right to receive that vaccine."

—Child research participant in Peru

For more information

For more information about PATH's cervical cancer vaccine project, please visit www.path.org/cervicalcancer or www.rho.org.

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Formative research results

Overall, formative research results in Peru demonstrated that people are interested in and supportive of HPV vaccination and other actions to combat cervical cancer. They also showed that important questions must be answered and obstacles addressed for vaccine introduction to progress smoothly. The strategies implemented in Peru's demonstration project will include the following elements, developed from the results of the formative research.

Peru's HPV vaccine delivery strategy: key elements

- Dispatch health workers to vaccinate girls at school, targeting those in grade 5 who are aged 9 and older.
- Strengthen coordination between health centers and schools so that educators are actively engaged in informing girls and parents and preparing logistics.
- Ensure systematic and early communication among divisions of the Ministry of Health (Ministerio de Salud, or MINSA) and between national and regional health authorities.
- Monitor the cold chain and actively identify and address problems, including increasing vaccine storage capacity and developing transport and storage solutions for rural areas.
- Develop a standardized protocol for vaccination that includes respectful treatment of girls and safe treatment and disposal of used needles and other medical waste.
- Motivate health personnel to report any adverse events when they occur.
- Develop a system for tracking full coverage with three doses of vaccine.

Peru's HPV vaccine communications strategy: key elements

- Disseminate information on the burden and seriousness of cervical cancer in Peru.
- Explain that a virus (HPV) is the cause of cervical cancer, and why HPV vaccines are more likely to prevent cervical cancer if administered to young adolescent girls.
- Create a climate of confidence by building on positive perceptions of vaccination and addressing local concerns.
- Inform communities that HPV vaccines have been shown to be safe and effective, with limited side effects.

- Make communities aware that health workers are trained on good hygiene, safe vaccination practices, and appropriate treatment of and respect for girls during vaccination.
- Use participatory methods and materials as well as mass media to inform girls and parents.
- Publicize endorsement of HPV vaccination by MINSA and other prominent authorities.

Peru's HPV vaccine advocacy strategy: key elements

- Generate momentum and leadership for HPV vaccine introduction through the immunization unit of MINSA as well as the unit's Advisory Committee and the Permanent Technical Committee (the groups responsible for vaccine recommendations).
- Make information available and accessible to national and regional policymakers on the burden and seriousness of cervical cancer, the nature and cost of the vaccine, and public attitudes and perceptions.
- Explain how HPV vaccination is consistent with Peru's health priorities, including addressing cancer, preventing infectious diseases, and promoting vaccination.
- Stimulate political will for reaching young adolescents, a currently neglected group, with a potentially beneficial health intervention.

References

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