



Kissing HPV or Kissing It Goodbye: Time To Reinvent Mass Media Strategy To Increase Acceptance Of HPV Vaccination Among Parents And Their Young Wards

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My opinion

As physicians, some of us first encountered the plight of human papillomavirus (HPV) among their patients once they moved across the continents. Surprisingly, those first observed episodes were among toddlers and even infants presenting for surgical management of recurrent respiratory/laryngeal papillomatosis under anesthesia [1]. This observed vertical transmission of HPV did not rattle much until the exposure to HPV vaccination promotion to counter cervical and other genital cancers [2-5]. Then came the awakening that some parents may be baffled by whether HPV vaccination among minor wards will promote precocious promiscuity among their wards [6] unless HPV vaccination among wards makes them accept their pubertal and sexual growth as the undeniable fact of life. Anyhow, the bottom line is that for parents to wholeheartedly accept HPV vaccination among their minor wards, the narrative in the mass media has to change and be outright open that kissing itself may transmit HPV considering that 15 years as the age for first kiss [7-10] is socially acceptable even among parents abhorring at the idea of their wards exploring sexual activity before attaining the legal age of maturity. After the age of maturity, it will be up to the wards themselves as young adults whether they want to constantly worry about infection control against HPV during their sexual lives by remaining unvaccinated against HPV or whether they want to embrace HPV vaccination at the first moment of turning legally mature if their parents could not muster up courage to accept their minor wards' needing HPV vaccination even if they are engaging only in socially acceptable kissing and making out before attaining the legal age of maturity. There is no better time than the current time to reinvent mass media strategy to increase acceptance of HPV vaccination among parents and their young wards because for the first time, there seems to be decline in genital cancers but increase in

oral cancers as related to HPV due to changing sexual practices among the newer generations mistakenly believing that sexually transmitted diseases are only transmitted genitally and not orally [11-14]. In this regard, a counterintuitive movie scene from a Bollywood movie comes to the mind wherein lead female character from India objects to lead male character from Italy kissing her while mistakenly worrying that she may get pregnant just by kissing [15]. That is not true but sexually transmitted diseases can and do spread orally including kissing [16-18] whereby parents may be more amenable to get their wards vaccinated to prevent HPV spread by kissing rather than vaccinating their sexually active wards against HPV. Essentially, the bottom line is that parents and their young wards have to ensure that the young wards not only not end up carrying the disease burden of HPV but also not end up transmitting their disease burden vertically to wards' future wards.

To further investigate into awareness about HPV vaccination, we personally bought targeted responses [19] with SurveyMonkey audience (n=130). All respondents were full-time students at four-year colleges across all the regions in the United States wherein almost 96% were aged 18-29 years and almost 53% were females. These respondents responded to the following two open-ended questions:

1. In your view, why do some parents NOT get their teenage children vaccinated against human papillomavirus (HPV)?
2. In your view, why do some young adults NOT get themselves vaccinated against human papillomavirus (HPV)?

Although only one of these 130 respondents viewed absence of sexual activity among young adults as the reason for the absence of HPV vaccination among young adults, as many as eight out of the same 130 respondents viewed absence of sexual activity among teenage children as the reason for the absence of HPV vaccination by parents among their teenage children. Interestingly, respondents open-ended responses did not elaborate in detail (a) why they were unsure about the parents' and young adults' and

reasons for absent HPV vaccination, (b) why parents and young adults feel HPV vaccination as unnecessary, (c) why parents and young adults do not educate themselves about HPV vaccination and its side-effects, and (d) why parents and young adults are non-believers about HPV vaccination and thus anti-vaxxers. As many as 10% of 130 respondents seemed disinterested in the questions and thus non-responsive.

Summarily, it is time to broaden awareness about HPV and HPV vaccination by broadening the minds of parents and young adults whereby they have to realize that they can either kiss HPV or kiss it goodbye with HPV vaccination.

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