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## **SOGC WELCOMES IMMUNIZATION COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING VACCINATING AGAINST CERVICAL CANCER**

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OTTAWA (Ontario)– The Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada (SOGC) welcomes the National Advisory Committee on Immunization's (NACI) recommendation that Canadian girls and woman aged 9 to 26 should be vaccinated to protect them against the Human Papillomavirus (HPV), the primary cause of cervical cancer and other gynaecological diseases.

“NACI's recommendations are an important step towards the prevention of HPV in Canadian girls and women.,” said Dr Donald Davis, President of the SOGC. “What has to happen now is for the federal, provincial and territorial governments to move quickly to increase access to HPV vaccination. Currently individuals must pay for the injections; SOGC believes that girls and young women should have access to vaccination, no matter where they live in Canada, and regardless of their financial situation.”

Immunization is a new strategy to help eliminate gynaecological diseases caused by HPV. While the vaccine was approved for use in Canada in July 2006, the federal government was waiting for the NACI Report's recommendations before proceeding to consider a publicly-funded vaccination program. “With these recommendations in hand, we are hopeful that the Canadian Immunization Committee (CIC) will move quickly to take the next vital step, to operationalize a publicly-funded vaccine program,” said Dr Davis.

Notwithstanding the positive preventive outcomes attributed to the vaccination, SOGC continues to emphasize the use of annual Pap testing in order to diagnose abnormal cervical cell activity at its earliest stages.

### **HPV-related gynaecological cancers**

Three out of four (75 per cent) Canadians will likely have at least one HPV infection in their lifetime.<sup>i</sup> Infection with HPV can cause low-grade cervical and genital lesions, abnormal Pap tests and is linked to vulvar and vaginal cancer. HPV types 6, 11, 16 and 18 cause 70 per cent of anogenital cancers and pre-cancers, 35-50 per cent of all mild cervical lesions and more than 90 per cent of genital warts.<sup>ii</sup>

Cervical cancer is the second most common cancer in Canadian women aged 20-44 with an estimated 1,400 newly diagnosed cases each year and more than 400 deaths.<sup>iii</sup> In addition, more than 200 Canadian women die from vulvar/vaginal cancer every year.<sup>iv</sup> It is not widely known that Canada has among the highest reported rates of cancer of the vulva worldwide.<sup>v</sup>

## About SOGC

The Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada (SOGC) is one of Canada's oldest national specialty organizations. Established in 1944, the Society's mission is to promote excellence in the practice of obstetrics and gynaecology and to advance the health of women through leadership, advocacy, collaboration, outreach and education. The SOGC represents obstetricians/gynaecologists, family physicians, nurses, midwives and allied health professionals working in the field of sexual reproductive health. For more information, visit [www.sogc.org](http://www.sogc.org).

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<sup>i</sup> Health Canada, *It's Your Health* Web page

(Accessed at [http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/iyh-vsv/diseases-maladies/hpv-vph\\_e.html](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/iyh-vsv/diseases-maladies/hpv-vph_e.html)).

<sup>ii</sup> Efficacy of a Prophylactic Quadrivalent Human Papillomavirus (HPV) (Types 6, 11, 16, 18) L1 Virus-Like Particle (VLP) Vaccine for Prevention of Cervical Dysplasia and External Genital Lesions (EGL). Presented by C. Sattler at the 45th Annual Interscience Conference on Antimicrobial Agents and Chemotherapy (ICAAC) in Washington, DC.

<sup>iii</sup> Canadian Cancer Society *Canadian Cancer Statistics 2005*

<sup>iv</sup> Statistics Canada. CANSIM table 102-0522. Deaths, by cause, Chapter II: Neoplasms (C00 to D48), age group and sex, Canada, 2000-2003.

<sup>v</sup> Woman's Health Surveillance Report. Published September 30, 2003. (Accessed at [http://www.cihi.ca/cihiweb/dispPage.jsp?cw\\_page=PG\\_29\\_E&cw\\_topic=29&cw\\_rel=AR\\_342\\_E](http://www.cihi.ca/cihiweb/dispPage.jsp?cw_page=PG_29_E&cw_topic=29&cw_rel=AR_342_E)).