



## Public Health

Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health

**Head Office:**

474 Wellington Road 18, Suite 100

RR #1 Fergus, ON N1M 2W3

T: 519.846.2715

1.800.265.7293

F: 519.846.0323

www.wdghu.org

info@wdghu.org

April 6, 2011

The Honourable Deborah Matthews, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care  
Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care  
Office of the Minister  
10<sup>th</sup> Floor, Hepburn Block  
80 Grosvenor Street  
Toronto, ON M7A 2C4

Dear Minister,

**RE: HPV Publicly Funded Vaccine - Grade 8 Eligibility**

The Board of Health for Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Health Unit is concerned about the limited eligibility period for girls to receive publicly funded vaccine for the prevention of HPV infection. Currently, if a female does not receive her first dose of the publicly funded HPV vaccine in grade 8, she is not eligible to receive the publicly funded series.

The Board of Health for Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Health Unit urges the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care to establish a “once eligible always eligible” policy, allowing females currently in grade eight to remain eligible to receive the vaccine until they turn 18 years of age.

In Canada, each year there are approximately 1,400 women diagnosed with cervical cancer, with 400 deaths<sup>1</sup>. In addition, a large portion of vulvar, anal, penile, oral, head and neck cancers are also associated with HPV infections. Approximately 2,000 cases of oral cancer are diagnosed each year in Canada. It is estimated that about two-thirds of these cases diagnosed today are caused by HPV.

HPV vaccination is highly effective in decreasing HPV infection and transmission. Vaccination provides protection from 75% of viruses that cause cervical cancers and 90% of viruses that cause genital warts.

In Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph, uptake of the publicly funded program has ranged between 50-62% since 2007. Five provinces are offering short-term catch-up programs (e.g., Alberta, British Columbia, Saskatchewan, New Brunswick and Quebec). Recommendations from the Canadian Immunization Committee - National Advisory Committee on Immunization, suggest that the lack of an available catch-up program is “inequitable for the teenagers outside the targeted school groups and for the women from 15 to 26 years old who are not going to school, but for whom HPV vaccine is recommended.”<sup>2</sup>

To reiterate, the Board of Health for Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Health Unit urges the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care to change policy to allow eligible females to remain so until they turn 18 years of age.

Yours truly,



Amanda Rayburn,  
Chair, Board of Health, WDG Public Health

AR/wp

cc Chairs, Board of Health, Ontario Public Health Units

<sup>1</sup>Cancer Care Ontario Cervical Cancer in Ontario. Retrieved March 6, 2011  
<http://www.cancercare.on.ca/pcs/screening/cervscreening/>

<sup>2</sup>Canadian Immunization Committee. (2007). *Recommendations on a Human Papillomavirus Immunization Program, December 2007*. Retrieved March 30, 2011: <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/publicat/2008/papillomavirus-papillome/papillomavirus-papillome-index-eng.php>



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10<sup>th</sup> Floor, Hepburn Block  
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Toronto, ON M7A 2C4

Dear Minister,

**Re: HPV Publicly Funded Vaccine – Male Eligibility**

The Board of Health for Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Health Unit is concerned about the lack of a publicly funded HPV vaccination program for males.

The Board of Health for Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Health Unit urges the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care to make available the publically funded vaccine to males in grades 8 and until they are 18 years of age.

The HPV vaccine was introduced in 2006 and the supplementary information largely focused on preventing cervical cancer. In Canada, each year, there are approximately 1,400 women diagnosed with cervical cancer, with 400 deaths.<sup>1</sup> In addition, a large portion of vulvar, anal, penile, oral, head and neck cancers are also associated with HPV infection. Approximately 2,000 cases of oral cancer are diagnosed each year in Canada. It is estimated that about two-thirds of these cases diagnosed today are caused by HPV.

HPV vaccination is highly effective in decreasing HPV infection and transmission. Vaccination provides protection from 90% of viruses that cause genital warts.

Although approved by Health Canada in 2010 for use in males, the HPV vaccine is still unavailable as a publicly funded program for young males in Ontario. To date, the promotion of the HPV vaccine has been directed at young females, with the media focusing primarily on the direct link between HPV and cervical cancer. There is a growing body of evidence linking HPV with anal, penile, oral, head and neck cancers. According to the World Health Organization, these cancers are much less frequent in Canada compared to cancer of the cervix, however "their association with HPV make them potentially preventable and subject to similar preventative strategies"<sup>2</sup> As such, equity and ethical considerations should warrant discussion at a provincial level about why the HPV vaccine is still not publicly available for young men.

To reiterate, the Board of Health for Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Health Unit urges the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care to make available the publically funded vaccine to males in grades 8 and until they are 18 years of age.

Yours truly,



Amanda Rayburn,  
Chair, Board of Health, WDG Public Health

AR/wp

cc Chairs, Board of Health, Ontario Public Health Units

<sup>1</sup>Cancer Care Ontario Cervical Cancer in Ontario. Retrieved March 6, 2011

<http://www.cancercare.on.ca/pcs/screening/cervscreening/>

<sup>2</sup>World Health Organization. (2007). Human Papillomavirus and Related Cancers. Summary Report Update. Retrieved March 30, 2011:

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