



*Students presented their findings at a poster session hosted by the Larner College of Medicine at UVM.
Students are pictured with their faculty mentor, Wendy Davis*

HPV PREVENTION AT THE DENTIST?

UVM medical students assess HPV vaccine counseling practices among dentists and dental hygienists to improve HPV vaccine promotion in routine dental practice and increase vaccine coverage and cancer prevention in Vermont.

The human papilloma virus is the primary cause of an increase in new cases of oropharyngeal cancer in the U.S. The steps between oral HPV acquisition and development of HPV-positive oropharyngeal cancer are unknown but HPV vaccination of adolescents is the most promising prevention strategy.

PROJECT GOAL

Assess knowledge and current HPV vaccine counseling practices among dentists and dental hygienists to improve HPV vaccine promotion in routine dental practice and increase vaccine coverage and cancer prevention in Vermont.

METHODS

The research included key Informant Interviews and a provider survey. The survey was designed to assess knowledge, beliefs, practices and barriers regarding HPV vaccination. It was distributed to 392 practicing Vermont dentists and 559 dental hygienists with a response rate of 34%. 266 completed surveys were eligible for analysis.

SURVEY RESULTS

- 90% of dental providers believe it is important to play an active role in general medical care
- Approximately half of the respondents noted they lack the knowledge to recommend the vaccine and/or believe it is not their responsibility
- Dentists more accurately (78%) reported that HPV vaccine does not cause serious side effects than hygienists (63%).
- Over 75% of dental providers responded that they rarely discuss or recommend HPV vaccination to patients/parents

BARRIERS

- Provider perception of parental concerns/opposition is a primary barrier
- Dentists/hygienists agree that the main barriers to recommending HPV vaccine to adolescents are: not the responsibility of dental provider (27%), lack of confidence in knowledge (19%), time constraints (14%) and parent philosophical/religious opposition (11%)

CONCLUSION

- Targeted provider education regarding HPV vaccine and guidelines for oral health care providers may help to address knowledge gaps and increase confidence in recommending the HPV vaccine.
- Providers may need system supports to incorporate HPV vaccination counseling into practice.
- High interest in HPV dental patient educational materials suggests motivation to incorporate into clinical practice.

*Adapted with permission from: **Role of the Dental Community in HPV Vaccine Promotion.** T. Luke Arnell, M. Lauren Donnelly, Alexis Nadeau, Laura Till MS, Collin York, Pedram Zargari, Meredith Graves PhD, Alan Howard MS, Christine Finley APRN, Wendy Davis MD.*