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From The Sunday Times

June 17, 2007

Girls to get sex virus vaccine

Sarah-Kate Templeton, Health Correspondent

GIRLS aged 12 are to be vaccinated against a sexually transmitted virus that causes cervical cancer under plans to be approved this week by a government committee.

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation is expected to recommend that all girls should be given the jab in the first year of secondary school to protect them against the human papilloma virus (HPV).

The committee, which comprises senior health specialists, is also expected to recommend a catchup campaign to vaccinate all girls aged 12-16.

The final decision about who will receive the vaccine, which costs more than £300 for a series of three doses, rests with the Department of Health. However, it is intended the programme should start in September 2008.

Ministers are known to be in favour although vaccinating girls against HPV will cost more than all the other childhood vaccinations put together. By comparison, the measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccine costs about £12 for two doses.

The committee believes the expense is justified. The vaccine has been shown to be effective if it is administered before girls are sexually active. If all 12-year-olds were immunised, which would cost more than £100m a year, the committee believes death rates from cervical cancer could be slashed. The virus accounts for 70% of cases of the disease.

There may, however, be concerns among parents about children being overloaded with vaccinations. Children already receive at least seven jabs by the age of 12. As with the MMR vaccine, parents would be free to decide whether their children had the HPV jab.

In America, where the jab has been introduced in several states, there has also been criticism from religious groups that the vaccines can encourage girls to have unprotected sex and that it sends out confused messages about when it is right for girls to lose their virginity.

However, Dr Syed Ahmed, a committee member, said: "Surveys show the vast majority of parents are in favour of the vaccine. I don't think girls are thinking about cancer when they decide whether or not to have sex. They are more concerned about becoming pregnant or catching chlamydia or gonorrhoea."

The committee also says there is little evidence of any side effects, which are far outweighed by the benefits. Cervical cancer affects about 3,000 British women each year, some of whom can be in their twenties. About 1,000 women die from the disease every year.

Last week a report by the government's Independent Advisory Group on Sexual Health and HIV gave a warning about the explosion of sexually transmitted diseases in young people.

The report warned that teenagers are having sex at a younger age and are having a higher number of partners.

And according to a study by the United Nations International Children's Fund, more teenagers in Britain have had sex by the age of 15 than in any other European country. The figures showed 38% of children have had sex by 15 compared with 22% in France and 16% in Spain.

Germany, France, Italy, Austria, Luxembourg and Norway have all recommended that the HPV vaccine is given to girls and young women.

The Australian government has also recommended that all girls are vaccinated from the age of 12

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In my family alone there have been various types of cancer affecting both female and male members. As my daughter is now 13 does this then mean she will not qualify for the vaccine or when it is brought out widely next year again when nearly 14 will she be to old to receive it. Just a ? as it is aimed for year 7 students 11/12 yrs only. Regarding the comments on others yes it is a risk as is everything in life but id rather lessen her chances of getting this disease then watching her suffer with it. Plus you Dont have to be Sexually Active to get Cervical Cancer.

Jillybean, Manchester, England

I am a sexagenarian who has considered the subject of vaccines for a great number of years. It is well to remember that we didn't lick smallpox until we stopped vaccinating for it. There is something of a paradox with regard to demonstrating vaccine efficacy even when you can trust the science which is almost never the case today. I have gotten to the point where I question the whole vaccine paradigm. I think a case could be made that vaccines are designed to weaken the immune system and increase the risk of chronic poor health in later life. This is not as heretical a notion as it may sound if you consider who benefits. I haven't had a vaccine in twenty years and will not willingly get another and most especially if it has anything to do with that "gonna kill your whole family and your dog any day now" bird flu.

A thought provoking video on the subject here:

<http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=8610554679207090010>

Jeffrey Irving, Pinehurst, NC, NC, US

Ignorant fools, google Gardasil and enlighten yourself as to the toxicity, and deadly side effects of this crap, which is after all just another money spinner for Big Pharmaceutical multinationals.

Eric, AUSTRALIA, Nth Quensland, QLD

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