

# "HPV Immunization"

## Now or Never

Dr. Vivien Brown MDCM, CCFP, FCFP, NCMP

Dr. Christine Palmay, MD, CFPC



Spring signals a fresh start, and this year especially so, as we slowly emerge from COVID crisis management and attempt to forge a new reality of hope, rebirth, and reassessment. Part of this new beginning must include a refocus on preventative medicine and in particular, catching up on missed routine immunization care. The time to act was yesterday.

As discussed in previous newsletters, the pandemic significantly disrupted school-based immunization programs across the country. In Ontario, 12 year-old children are eligible to receive three vaccinations funded under our provincial program: HPV, Hep B, and Men-C-ACYW, with each province adhering to its own schedule.

From March 2020 to January 2022, Ontario schools were closed for 27 weeks. While pre-pandemic vaccination updates in Ontario historically fall short of NACI targets (60% of eligible middle school students were immunized in 2018-19), rates dropped to 5.2% in 2019-20 and to a concerning 0.8% in 2020-21.

Similar declines have also been reported in Alberta (41% in 2019-20 and 45% in 2020-21), British Columbia (28% in 2019-20 and 35% 2020-21) and Quebec (47% in 2019-20 and 12% 2020-21) but did not nearly reach the shocking decline seen in Ontario. Canadian studies emphasize that unless an HPV vaccine target of 90% is reached, thousands of women will develop, and may die from, preventable HPV-related cancers.

In response to address this call to action, The Federation of Medical Women of Canada (FMWC) has convened a task force comprised of family physicians, specialists, pharmacists, public health representatives, and a school board representative to develop concrete and actionable recommendations. Full details can be accessed via the link provided at the end of this article.

*"Act Now. for now  
is all you have"*

- Og Mandino

### **In summary, 11 short-term recommendations from multiple perspectives were developed to ensure timely and practical targeted action items:**

1. Reopening a school-led HPV vaccination program.
2. A catch-up campaign for high school including access to vaccine clinics, education, and awareness campaigns.
3. The expansion of eligibility for funded HPV vaccination to all people up to 25 years of age.
4. Repurposing resources that were developed for COVID-19 for the HPV catch-up campaign.
5. Development of a mobile vaccination clinic.
6. Immediate education of all middle school and high school teachers with the creation and distribution of materials for teachers to use in health and sex education classes, beginning in the 2021-22 school year.

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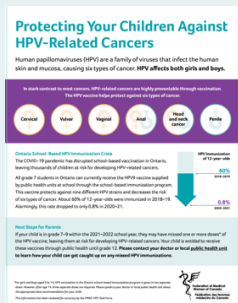
7. Education to all health care providers regarding school-based closure and HPV counselling.
8. Ensuring cohesive communication by encouraging primary care partners to endorse HPV vaccination using the same messaging and assets that will be developed as part of the education and awareness campaign.
9. Empowering the FMWC to start an HPV awareness and education campaign with key stakeholder partners, including the Ontario government. The campaign must include consistent, evidence-based messaging for parents, the public, and providers.
10. A recommendation that FMWC employ a public relations firm to develop a media strategy for all stakeholders.
11. Advocating that the Ministry of Health immediately reach out to families to ensure that they are aware of this gap in immunization care.

**While long-term plans are also essential, given the sharp drop in vaccine rates since the onset of the pandemic, we hope that these suggestions can be implemented efficiently across all levels of medical care.**

**If the time to act was yesterday, these suggestions must be implemented today to change the forecast for tomorrow.**

## Resource Of The Month

[Parent Guide](#)



## Back In Time

In ancient Egypt, Greece, and Japan, women used softened papyrus, lint wrapped around wood, and paper to absorb menstruation bleeding.

## Around The Globe

The European Cancer Organisation published two new important resources supporting your advocacy efforts at national level.

- ["Improving HPV Vaccine Uptake in Children, Adolescents, and Young Adults"](#)  
– an umbrella review of interventions supporting HPV uptake.
- ["Putting HPV on the Map: The State of HPV Prevention Programmes in the WHO European Region"](#):  
a mapping of HPV programs and cervical cancer screening practices in the WHO European Region.



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## Clinic Of The Month

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### Active Care Medical Centre

[Health Care Matters \(wpcomstaging.com\)](http://wpcomstaging.com)

In response to the pandemic related disruptions resulting in the majority of Ontario students missing routine school based vaccines in 2020 through 2022, the team at Active Care Medical Centre has taken on an active role in supporting Public Health's routine vaccine catch-up initiatives for students in grade 7-12. The team has been providing vaccines typically administered in schools to those students who missed out during the pandemic related school closures. Our team understands that public health has limited capacity to provide catch-up vaccines to all of the students impacted by the pandemic and those missing routine vaccines, over 18,000 in the Middlesex-London area alone. In response, our nurses and physicians are routinely asking high-school aged patients about their HPV vaccine status and ordering public doses from the health unit, in order to improve access and increase uptake amongst this population. The team is working hard to bridge the gap in routine vaccines created by the pandemic. Working diligently to ensure all kids are vaccinated and knowing that Cancer Won't Wait, the team is ensuring that no child is left behind.

## White Paper

*In place of a webinar in this newsletter, listen to the latest episode of **IN MY OPINION** hosted by Dr. Vivien Brown and Dr. Christine Palmay, experts in understanding the importance of vaccines. In the episode, they share their perspective on the importance of vaccines and, more specifically, the HPV vaccine in the fight against HPV related Cancers.*



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