

ABSTRACT

Author: Emory Hanby Farb

Title: ASSESSING THE KNOWLEDGE AND ATTITUDES TOWARD HUMAN PAPILLOMAVIRUS VACCINATION AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS

Thesis Advisor: Bernadette Madara

Department: Department of Nursing and Honors College

Year: 2019

The human papillomavirus (HPV) is the most common sexually transmitted infection across the United States; with nearly half of new infections occurring in people ages 15-24, it is likely that many may be exposed to HPV during college (CDC, 2015). With no current treatment or cure for HPV infection, HPV vaccination serves as a primary preventative measure as one of the two preventative vaccinations to prevent cancer (Prevent Cancer Institute, 2017). Despite success rates and efficacy of this cutting-edge medical innovation, vaccination uptake against HPV remains low when compared with other recommended vaccines.

This study evaluated undergraduate student understanding of and view towards HPV infection and vaccination with further assessment of vaccination uptake and acceptance. The convenience sample of 53 undergraduates were surveyed using an online questionnaire in December 2018 and January 2019. The population studied was targeted with the incentive of appraising and educating the “catch-up” culture, i.e., the population to which HPV vaccination is often offered for the last time (under age 26). Results showed an under-vaccinated population with a considerably higher percentage of females vaccinated (50%) compared to male students (17.4%).

In assessment of knowledge related to HPV, results revealed a mean knowledge score of 13.19 (± 2.184) (73% accuracy), suggesting to the researcher that while less than half of the population has been vaccinated, the population is moderately informed. Perceived vulnerability towards HPV infection determined that while this is a moderately informed sample, students had a low perception of their susceptibility to contract HPV, prompting a cause for concern. The majority of unvaccinated students were in the early stages of decision-making related to vaccination uptake. This study serves to promote campus health centers to provide vaccination opportunities, health education and stress peer advocacy programs concerning the need for HPV vaccination.