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Promising horizons: Physicians as HPV vaccine advocates

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Abstract

In an effort to increase uptake and acceptance of a publically-funded school-based HPV vaccination program in British Columbia, General Practitioners in Oncology (GPO's) in British Columbia (BC), were surveyed to identify potential opportunities to involve them as public advocates for the program. Family physicians are one of parents' most trusted sources of information regarding their children's health. GPOs, or a general practitioner who provides oncology care in a primary care setting, are particularly well suited to serving as HPV vaccine advocates since as General Practitioners they are parents' likely source for information about the vaccine. Additionally, as physicians who treat cervical cancer, their intimate knowledge about the morbidity and mortality associated with it, makes them particularly passionate about the vaccine, and the prevention of the disease. 42 GPO's in BC completed a mailed or online survey regarding their current practices, knowledge, and resource needs concerning HPV, the vaccine, and the HPV immunization program, and their willingness to be contacted to participate in stated public HPV vaccine supporter activities. The survey found that 42% of surveyed GPOs were willing to act as public supporters of the HPV vaccine. The survey also identified education needs among GPOs concerning HPV, the vaccine, and the HPV immunization program in BC. This study found that GPOs in BC are willing to publicly support the HPV immunization program and that involving physicians in the promotion of public health programs is a viable option that should be further explored and evaluated.

Biography

Sana Shahram is currently completing her PhD in Interdisciplinary Studies at the University of British Columbia (UBC), in Kelowna, BC, Canada. Her research focuses on issues of maternal health among vulnerable populations. She holds a Masters in Public Health from Tufts School of Medicine in Boston, with a concentration in Health Communications as well as a BSc (Cell biology/genetics) and BA (English Literature) from UBC in Vancouver. She also currently works as a Research Coordinator for UBC's Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, based out of BC Women's Hospital in Vancouver, Canada.