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HUMAN PAPILOMAVIRUS VACCINATION IN BELARUS: CURRENT SITUATION

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Introduction. Human papillomavirus (HPV) is the most common viral infection of the reproductive tract. According to their carcinogenic potential, HPV types can be classified as high risk and low risk ones. The low risk HPVs may cause condylomas and benign cervical lesions that do not form malignancies. The high risk HPVs are known to be the cause of essentially all cervical cancers and of some other anogenital cancers such as cancer of the vulva, vagina, penis, and anus, as well as cancer of the oropharynx.

In the recent years, the role of HPV vaccination in cancer prevention has been widely evaluated; it has a reassuring safety record backed by more than 10 years of monitoring and research. HPV vaccination has been included in the national immunization schedules in a number of countries. Currently, there is no government vaccination program for HPV in the Republic of Belarus; vaccinations are made only on a paid basis.

The aim of the study: to analyze the information from scientific articles on the topic of HPV and to study social attitude to HPV vaccination.

Materials and methods. Scientific sources on the role of HPV in cancer progression were analyzed. Updated information from clinical trials and postlicensure safety investigations was studied. Online survey involving 107 BSMU students of 1st and 2nd year and 44 students of MSLU was carried out to consider their awareness and attitude to HPV vaccination.

Results and discussion. According to the results of the survey, the level of students' awareness on the issue is rather low. For instance, in BSMU 33.6% of the questioned didn't know about HPV vaccination. 91.6% were not vaccinated, 59.8% of them are not going to be vaccinated against HPV at all. Among MSLU students participating in the survey nobody was vaccinated, 65.9% didn't know about HPV vaccination, 79.5% are not going to be vaccinated at all. The most popular reasons to avoid the vaccination were unawareness of the virus and vaccine existence, doubt of necessity of HPV vaccination, uncertainty about safety and effectiveness of the vaccination.

Conclusion. HPV vaccine is proven to be highly effective cancer prevention, that's why it must be recommended the same way as other routine adolescent vaccines. Ideally, people should be vaccinated as adolescents, before they are exposed to HPV. However, people who have already been infected with one or more HPV types can still get protection from other HPV types covered by the vaccine.

Public awareness of HPV in Belarus was revealed to be rather poor. The lack of knowledge keeps people from vaccination, and that contributes to maintaining circulation of the virus in population. Therefore, active promotion of HPV vaccine information is necessary. The development of government vaccination program for HPV and facilitating of the payment terms are also required.