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## **NEWS RELEASE**

# **Scientific leaders signal major breakthroughs in elimination of human papillomavirus (HPV) related cancer**

To mark International HPV Awareness Day March 4th, 2022, the International Papillomavirus Society (IPVS) has warmly welcomed two major advances that can accelerate progress and reduce inequalities in the prevention of HPV-related cancers in women and men.

HPV (human papillomavirus) is a virus that is associated with 630,000 cancer diagnoses around the world. These cancers lead to 470,000 deaths worldwide, over 300,000 of which are deaths of women due to cervical cancer. Almost all cases of cervical and anal cancers, and one third of head and neck cancers, are caused by HPV. Tools currently available for the prevention of HPV -related cancers are vaccination, cervical screening and the treatment of cervical pre-cancers in women.

Vaccination of young adolescents (under 14) with two vaccine doses has been the recommended standard of care for several years. However, signaling a groundbreaking policy change, the UK Government's Joint Commission on Vaccination and Immunization has issued interim advice in recommending a shift to a single dose schedule, a change that has been warmly welcomed by IPVS President Prof Suzanne Garland.

'The evidence that a single dose vaccine schedule for HPV offers a high degree of protection against the types of HPV that cause cancer is now clear. This provides the world with an enormous opportunity to drive access to vaccination, which could see the elimination of HPV-related cancer in a generation. The benefits in terms of logistics, workforce and costs are clear and represents a potential game-changer for low- and middle-income countries as they work towards the WHO 90% HPV vaccination target.' said IPVS President Prof Suzanne Garland. She continued, 'the COVID 19 pandemic has caused significant disruption to vaccination and screening programs, as well as the diversion of workforce, laboratory and manufacturing resources. The ability to provide protection from cancer with a one less jab would really mean one less worry for the world.'

Another significant recent breakthrough in the prevention of HPV-related cancer welcomed by IPVS is the halting of the ANCHOR study into anal cancer prevention due to clear results showing that pre-cancerous changes in the anus can be treated and can halt progression to cancer. Over 50,000 people are diagnosed with anal cancer each year and while this study focused on people living with HIV, the results of the trial suggest that anal cancer prevention is highly likely to be possible in other groups known to be at increased risk of anal cancer, including women with a history of cervical cancer or vulvar cancer, men who have sex with men, and both women and men who are immunosuppressed.

Dr Joel Palefsky who led the trial, and who also leads the International HPV Awareness Campaign said ‘Almost all cases of cervical and anal cancer are caused by HPV. While vaccination provides a first line of defense, for many people who either missed out on vaccination, or who simply aren’t covered by local vaccination policies, there has been no effective tool to prevent anal cancer. It is exciting that for the first time we have clear evidence of an approach that could reduce the impact of anal cancer on men and women affected by this disease.’ Dr. Palefsky and his team will be working with various professional entities to translate these results into standard of care guidelines where possible.

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### Notes to Editors

1. **For more information please contact Anita Wiseman [admin@askabout HPV.org](mailto:admin@askabout HPV.org) or call +44 7940 029444**
2. **International Papillomavirus Society:** The IPVS is the only organization dedicated to the support of research and public health initiatives related to papillomaviruses, **a major cause** of human cancers and a model for the biology, treatment and prevention of other many cancers. IPVS serves as the organizational structure for the field of leading biomedical scientists, physicians and other health care providers engaged in papillomavirus research since 1975. [IPVS - Who We Are \(ipvsoc.org\)](http://ipvsoc.org)
3. **International HPV Awareness Day:** On March 4<sup>th</sup> around 120 organisations worldwide, facilitated and supported by IPVS, deliver events and activities to raise public awareness and understanding of HPV. Find out more about the One Less Worry Campaign and the information available in many languages about HPV at [AskAboutHPV.org](http://AskAboutHPV.org).
4. **Sources**
  - a. [COVID-19 and cervical cancer - A pandemic’s impact and a global response](#)
  - b. [Sharp Declines in Breast and Cervical Cancer Screening](#)
  - c. [Single Dose of HPV Vaccine Yields Long-Term Protection from Many Cancer-Causing Types](#)
  - d. [JCVI interim advice on a one-dose schedule for the routine HPV immunization programme](#)
  - e. [Treating Anal Cancer Precursor Lesions Reduces Cancer Risk for People With HIV](#)

## Spokespeople

**Professor Suzanne Garland**, IPVS President and internationally-recognized clinical microbiologist and sexual health physician with a special interest in infectious diseases of women. She is Professor of Reproductive & Neonatal Infectious Diseases, Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, University of Melbourne and Director of the Women's Centre for Infectious Diseases in Melbourne. Regular advisor to the World Health Organization (WHO) on sexual and reproductive health infections, cervical cancer and human papillomavirus (HPV).

Prof Garland can talk about:

- Efficacy of HPV vaccination for cancer prevention
- Challenges and opportunities in advancing the WHO Cervical Cancer Elimination Strategy
- Examples of triumphs in HPV vaccination programs

**Dr. Joel Palefsky** is the founder and chairperson of the IPVS International HPV Awareness Day campaign, and past President of IPVS. He is a leading expert on HPV infection, specializing in the impact of HPV on men and those living with HIV, and in reducing the risk of anal cancer. He is founder and past President of the International Anal Neoplasia Society. He is currently a professor at the University of California, San Francisco and leads research and clinical trials into HPV-related infections.

Dr. Palefsky can talk about:

- The urgent need to prevent, treat and vaccinate against HPV infection in men
- HPV infection in men and women living with HIV
- Prevention of anal cancer
- [HPV Awareness Day Campaign 2022 'One Less Worry'](#)
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