

The HPV Vaccine Crisis in Japan

Introduction HPV vaccination is one of the most effective ways to prevent cancer. After 14 years since its introduction in 2006, HPV vaccine has been proven to be extremely safe and effective against cervical cancers and other cancers caused by HPV infection. Combined with cervical, rapid scale-up of HPV vaccination can make cervical cancer elimination achievable in most countries. While many countries are on their way to eliminate cancer, the situation in Japan is not promising. After reports of severe adverse events following immunization, the government suspended the recommendation for HPV vaccine, resulting in a significant drop in vaccine coverage to almost 0%. The situation has remained for 7 years, leaving female, especially young women to be extremely vulnerable to cervical cancer. This is a matter of paramount importance and actions should be taken promptly to improve the situation.

Methods We conducted an extensive literature review and consulted with a Secretariat of the Immunization Committee of Ministries of Health, Labor, and Welfare, an Obstetrics and Gynecology Professor, and an Infectious Disease Professor to better assess the local situation.

Key findings We propose a comprehensive and strategic communication plan, involving the key stakeholders and using multiple channels, with a monitor and evaluation system, to counter the misinformation about the HPV vaccine and improve the status quo.

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