

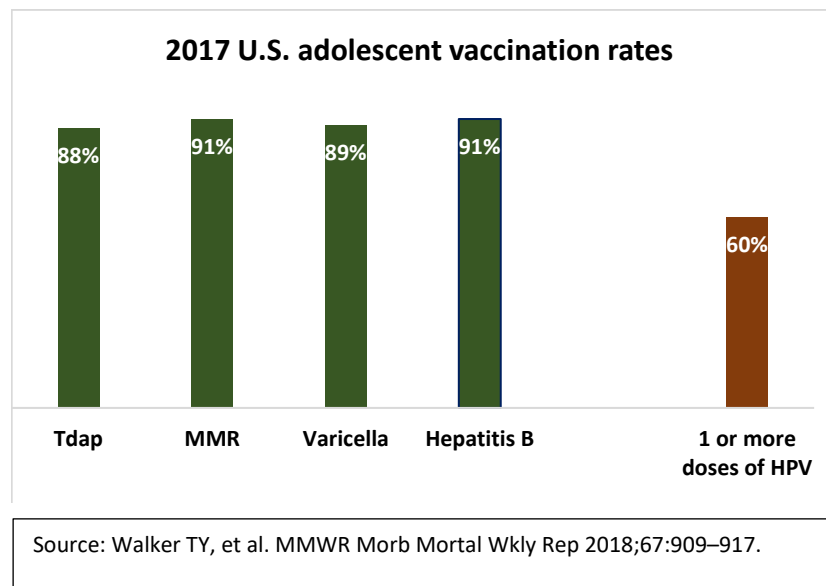
# Increasing Adolescent HPV Vaccination Rates in Underserved Communities – Ideas for New Interventions



## Why it matters

- The Human Papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine is an effective way to prevent cervical and other cancers.
- But HPV vaccination rates are low across the country, especially in underserved communities.
- Successful interventions to improve vaccination rates are available, but rely heavily on overburdened healthcare providers.
- At the same time, many adolescents and caregivers lack needed information about the HPV vaccine to make a decision.
- Research suggests that a combination of community education and action by trusted healthcare providers can increase vaccination rates, but the challenge is to keep interventions simple enough for use in practice.

## Comparing HPV with other routine vaccines



## What we learned

**Study population:** Adolescents and caregivers from underserved communities in Greater Boston and Greater Lawrence, MA.

**Key takeaways:** Adolescents and caregivers are open to education about the HPV vaccine in community settings and want more trustworthy information before making a vaccination decision. For those who want the vaccination, they want to get it from trusted healthcare providers, not in a community setting.

## How we learned it

We learned by analyzing data from:

- Three focus group discussions with people who identified as Black, Latino and/or Brazilian and were caregivers to children aged 11-14 who had not been vaccinated for HPV.
- Three focus group discussions with adolescents who identified as Black, Latino, and/or Brazilian, were aged 11-14 years, and had not been vaccinated for HPV.

### Detailed findings

#### **Vaccination context**

**Trust in providers:** Both adolescents and caregivers expressed a high level of trust in their medical providers, especially if they had a long-lasting relationship with them.

**Family decision-making:** Both adolescents and caregivers identified parents as the main decision-makers when it comes to healthcare, especially for vaccination.

**Information sources:** Adolescents and caregivers said their medical providers and the internet were their main information sources on vaccines.

#### **Knowledge about the HPV vaccine**

Caregivers and adolescents were interested in the idea that the vaccine helps prevent certain cancers. However, caregivers had strong concerns around potential long-term side effects of the vaccine, especially around future reproductive health for girls. Adolescents had concerns around immediate side effects and pain during vaccination.

#### **Education strategies**

Caregivers were excited about opportunities for outreach and engagement. Caregivers were interested in attending educational events focused on HPV, particularly those geared toward adolescent health. Caregivers and adolescents wanted more information on both positive and negative consequences of the vaccine.

### Who was involved

The study was led by Dr. Ingrid Katz and Dr. Shoba Ramanadhan, with assistance from Constance Fontanet and Marina Teixeira. The team consulted with the Outreach Core of the U54 Partnership between the Dana-Farber/Harvard Cancer Center and the University of Massachusetts, Boston. The U54 advisory board includes five members who have rich expertise in social justice and community health, and represent the City of Lawrence Mayor's Health Task Force, the City of Lawrence Community Development Office, Greater Love Tabernacle, Health Resources in Action, and the Brazilian Worker Center.

### Funding and contact info

This work was funded by the National Cancer Institute (U54CA156732, PIs: Colon-Carmona, Macoska, Viswanath, Abel and 2P30CA006516-52, PI: Glimcher). For more information, please contact Sara Minsky ([sara\\_minsky@dfci.harvard.edu](mailto:sara_minsky@dfci.harvard.edu)).

### Next steps for interventions

Our results showed adolescents and caregivers had many concerns and misconceptions about HPV and the HPV vaccine. Those designing educational materials or interventions around HPV should consider the following:

- Information should come from a trusted source, such as a trusted community organization or a known healthcare provider.
- Educational materials should present a balanced assessment of the risks and benefits of receiving the vaccine, with customization for adolescent and caregiver audiences.

**Additional resources** about effective HPV education interventions can be found through PLANET MassCONNECT: [planetmassconnect.org/index.php/resource-finder](https://planetmassconnect.org/index.php/resource-finder)

### Key definitions

**HPV:** The Human Papillomavirus (HPV) is a common virus that can lead to different types of cancer.

**HPV vaccine:** Vaccine that helps protect against certain strains of HPV/certain types of cancers.