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Editorial

Prospects for the new HPV Prevention and Control Board



In December 2015, a group of international experts in the field of HPV launched the Human Papillomavirus (HPV) Prevention and Control Board. This Board models its activities in the field of HPV after the successful example of the Viral Hepatitis Prevention Board. With a clear goal of touching ground the Board brings together key experts as well as patient/advocacy groups and government officials on specific scientific or programmatic issues.

One of the main roles for the Board is the active promotion of an integrated, collaborative approach to new challenges in the control and prevention of HPV infection and disease. The Board facilitates interactions between people and/or groups for issues related to HPV control and prevention, providing a platform for discussion where one does not currently exist. As an independent advisor to local policy-makers for the introduction and/or extension of HPV vaccination programs, the Board provides assistance in the prioritization of vaccination initiatives and catalyzes the political commitment necessary for their implementation. The Board also supports the establishment of a national HPV control and prevention plan in countries, taking advantage of existing recommendations from the WHO and other supra-national organizations.

The HPV Prevention and Control Board organizes country/regional meetings and technical meetings with relevant stakeholders. Country/regional meetings provide an in-depth look at various aspects of HPV immunization and screening at national and regional level. Technical meetings target innovative approaches, opportunities and concerns in the field of HPV vaccination and screening.

At its kick-off meeting, the Board determined an initial list of issues that would most benefit from its multidisciplinary approach. These topics fall under three broad categories: implementation of vaccination programs, expansion of existing vaccination programs, and integration of vaccination and screening.

Topics in the first category are particularly relevant for regions where vaccination programs do not exist but are being considered. These topics include: i) defining age of vaccination; ii) evaluating the correlation between the number of vaccine doses administered and degree of protection; iii) estimating the duration of protection and the potential need for, and timing of, booster doses of vaccine; iv) identifying an antibody level which can be used as a correlate of protection; v) characteristics of antibodies which protect against persistence of HPV infection; vi) cost issues of programs and vaccines; vii) important factors for effectively implementing vaccination programs against HPV; and viii) cultural barriers to immunizations.

The second category of topics focus on the possible extension of recommendations for vaccination from adolescent girls and young women to other target groups and address factors that could negatively impact vaccination coverage rates. These topics include i) broadening of vaccination programs to include adult women and boys/men; ii) assessing how to promote vaccination in a gender-neutral manner and increase vaccine uptake in low-coverage groups; iii) responding rapidly and effectively to perceived safety issues; and iv) proactive risk management and risk minimization strategies.

The third category of topics deals with the integration of vaccination and HPV screening programs. This category includes: i) assessing the quality of the diagnostic tests currently available for HPV; ii) evaluating the effects of different vaccination coverage and effectiveness rates on screening recommendations in younger women after initiation of vaccination programs; iii) adjusting screening recommendations over time to take into account the aging of the vaccinated population; and iv) combined screening and immunization strategies.

Information presented at the meetings and recommendations made by the Board are available the Board's website: www.hpvboard.org.

In this issue of Papillomavirus Research you will find the outcome of the first technical meeting of the HPV prevention and control Board, held in Antwerp in June 2016, discussing barriers to overcome in HPV vaccination and screening.

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