



# Monday *MONITOR*

Tuesday, March 25, 2008

Contact: Michelle Trupiano – 573.424.8717 (cell)

## **PREVENTION FIRST ACT LANGUISHING IN HOUSE AND SENATE**

As this post-spring break edition makes clear, there is much we could be doing as a state and nation to increase sexual health through comprehensive sex education and prevention programs and services. Fortunately, the Cervical Cancer Immunization bill sponsored by Sen. Justus (**SB778**) has now been second read in the House and, we hope, will be assigned to committee. At the same time, two comprehensive bills that would Put Prevention First—**HB2272** and **SB1215**—languish. HB2272 (Wright Jones) has not even been referred to committee; SB1215 (Bray) was referred last month to Senate Judiciary but has still not been scheduled for a hearing. If the leadership in the Missouri House and Senate is serious about improving the lives and health of Missouri women, they should put these bills on a fast track to passage.

## **MORE GOOD NEWS ON PREVENTION FROM THE FOOD & DRUG ADMINISTRATION**

**FDA To Consider Approving Gardasil Use By Women Up To Age 45**—*AP, March 19, 2008*

The Food and Drug Administration will consider whether to expand use of a vaccine intended to prevent cervical cancer to women aged 27 to 45, the vaccine maker said Wednesday. Gardasil, made by Whitehouse Station, N.J.-based Merck & Co., currently is approved for use in girls and women aged 9 through 26 to block four types of human papilloma virus, which can cause cervical cancer and genital warts. A decision is expected this summer.

There are dozens of different types of HPV, but those targeted by the vaccine types 6, 11, 16 and 18 account for more than 70 percent of all cases of cervical cancer. In asking the FDA to expand the use of Gardasil, Merck noted that women remain at risk of becoming infected with HPV throughout their lives. The government estimates that more than 6 million Americans get a new infection of HPV each year.

Gardasil is given in three shots over a six-month period. Experts emphasize that the vaccine is purely preventive. It does not cure an existing HPV infection, but can prevent future infections. That's one reason it is recommend that girls get the vaccine before they are sexually active.

Merck spokeswoman Kelley Dougherty said that an advisory committee would consider whether to urge testing for HPV infection before getting the vaccine. However, she noted that commercially available tests do not differentiate between the types of HPV. She said researchers found that few adult women were infected with all four HPV types, so getting the vaccine would protect them from any of the four they had not contracted.

Currently Gardasil is the only cervical cancer vaccine on the market. It has racked up about \$1 billion in sales since its June 2006 U.S. launch. GlaxoSmithKline PLC is awaiting approval of its own vaccine, Cervarix. [On the Net: FDA: <http://www.fda.gov> Merck: <http://www.merck.com>]

## **EDITORIALS ACROSS THE COUNTRY ECHO PPFA'S CALL FOR COMPREHENSIVE SEX ED**

*Ask for end to ineffective and dangerous "abstinence-only" programs – March 13, 2008*

On the heels of an alarming study by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) showing that one in four teen girls has a sexually transmitted infection (STI), and that more than three million teenage girls have an STI, newspaper editorials from across the country have echoed Planned Parenthood Federation of America's call to end ineffective and dangerous "abstinence-only" programs.

In the last decade, more than \$1.5 billion has been wasted on abstinence-only programs that do nothing to teach our teens responsibility, and zero federal dollars have been spent on comprehensive sex education. Planned Parenthood believes it's time to put money toward real solutions that will help prevent sexually transmitted infections and unintended pregnancies among teenagers. That's why Planned Parenthood is a leading advocate for education programs in America's schools that will keep teens healthy — by including information about abstinence as well as contraception, healthy communication, responsible decision making, and prevention of sexually transmitted infections.

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Planned Parenthood has created the nation's largest network of sex educators, who teach teens in schools nationwide, every day, how to protect themselves from unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections, including HIV/AIDS. Congress should put the right foot forward and immediately stop funding for dangerous abstinence-only programs that deny young people information about how to prevent pregnancy, protect their health and make responsible decisions.

**A roundup of editorials calling for comprehensive sex education and prevention policies:**

**Seattle Post Intelligencer editorial: Sex Education: Basic health care.** "Not surprising, some experts say the unsettling numbers are the result of abstinence-only sex education. Not to be swayed by facts, the Bush administration continues increased funding for abstinence-only sex ed while freezing the funds for programs that truly work, such as Planned Parenthood clinics. This means teens have fewer places to go for discreet, free STD screenings and practical, medically based sex-ed information. It seems that simply telling teens to 'Just Say No' to sex until marriage doesn't work well (something we've known for some time, thanks to a 2007 study requested by Congress)." [[http://seattlepi.nwsource.com/opinion/354752\\_stded.html](http://seattlepi.nwsource.com/opinion/354752_stded.html)]

**Baltimore Sun editorial: Too many infected teens.** "The findings make it clear that abstinence-only curriculums funded by the Bush administration are simply not relevant to large numbers of sexually active teens.... What all teens, and arguably preteens, need is comprehensive sex education that gives them information about condom use and contraception and encourages them to stand up for themselves in relationships. These programs are generally most effective."

[[http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/opinion/editorial/bal-ed\\_std13mar13\\_0.486638.story](http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/opinion/editorial/bal-ed_std13mar13_0.486638.story)]

**The Enquirer (Cincinnati) editorial: The 'talk': birds, bees, disease.** "Education is the first, best weapon in attacking this growing public health crisis. Parents need to talk to their children about the wisdom of abstaining from sex, about STDs, contraception and responsible decision-making. Schools need to put comprehensive health education back into the curriculum."

[<http://news.enquirer.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080313/EDIT01/803130311/1090/EDIT>]

**Roanoke Times editorial: Abstinence works only if practiced.** "After a decade of decline in teen sex, since 2001 and the ideologically driven push for abstinence-only education, the number of teens having sex is on the rise. So, too, are teen birth rates. At least Virginia is no longer subscribing to this unhealthy program. Last fall, Gov. Tim Kaine used the state budget crunch to eliminate matching funds for a state-sponsored abstinence-only program.... Sex education should teach children how to prevent becoming pregnant before they're ready to be parents and how to stay healthy so they can be parents when they are ready." [<http://www.roanoke.com/editorials/wb/154379>]



Lee Judge—Kansas City Star, March 12, 2008

**News Journal (Wilmington, DE) editorial: Teenagers' exposure to sexual diseases isn't treatable with denial.** "If anyone still thinks America's head-in-the-sand approach to sex education works, just take a look at a new report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.... Part of the solution is better information about sex, better screening for disease, and more prevention measures.... But that's easier said than done. For too long, sex education has been caught in the continuing cultural war over sex. The CDC survey indicates the 'just say no' approach is failing."

[<http://www.delawareonline.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080313/OPINION11/803130320/1112/OPINION>]

**Tucson Citizen editorial: Girls' risks, STD rates too high.** "A shocking new finding - that 1 in 4 teenage girls has a sexually transmitted disease - is one of the best arguments in a long while for safe-sex education."

[<http://www.tucsoncitizen.com/daily/opinion/79486.php>]