Children's Hospital of Philadelphia
PolicyLab

How can HPV vaccination rates be improved?

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The results of the HPV study featured in a recent New York Times article are impressive and promising. The authors found that even with low overall vaccination rates, the prevalence of infection with cancer-causing strains of HPV among teenage girls has decreased by half in the past decade. However, the persistently low vaccination rate in the United States puts thousands of girls at risk for developing cervical cancer. The authors point to doctors as one of the primary obstacles to increasing vaccination rates, highlighting the importance of clinician recommendation in promoting HPV vaccination in adolescents.

In a research study by PolicyLab's Alex Fiks, published this month in Pediatrics, we asked the question: who to support to improve HPV vaccination rates - clinicians or families? We found that supporting clinicians in a comprehensive way, including clinical alerts, education, and feedback, can significantly improve rates of initiation of the HPV vaccine series. In order to ensure completion of the series, we found it is important to engage the parent as well. However, the clinician is the linchpin of the HPV vaccination process. Putting systems in place to support clinicians in recommending the HPV vaccine to families can significantly improve vaccination rates, and is an important step toward protecting adolescents from developing cancer.

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