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Human Papillomavirus (HPV) Vaccination Status Among University Freshmen in Hawai'i

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ABSTRACT

Purpose/Background: The HPV vaccine provides immunity against nine HPV strains that cause cancer and genital warts. It is recommended for 11 to 12 year olds, and "catch-up" immunization is recommended for females 13 to 26 years old and males 13 to 21 years old. College students represent an important population for HPV vaccination due to their increased risk for HPV infection. Despite the benefits of the HPV vaccine, its coverage rates are low in Hawaii. Hawai'i is the home of two large universities on two islands that are representative of Hawai'i's populations, including Native Hawaiians, Filipinos, and Pacific Islanders. The purpose of this study was to assess the current HPV and HPV vaccine knowledge, barriers and beliefs among incoming Freshmen university students at University of Hawai'i at Mānoa and University of Hawai'i at Hilo.

Materials & Methods: In 2016, 200 University of Hawai'i at Mānoa (UHM) and University of Hawai'i at Hilo (UHH) Freshmen students responded to a survey that assessed their knowledge and awareness of HPV, the HPV vaccine, their current vaccination status, and barriers and motivators to vaccination. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize each survey variable first for all students and then separately for each campus.

Results: Overall 76% of Freshmen from both campuses heard of the HPV vaccine and 54% reported hearing it from their health care provider. Only 28% UHM and 23% UHH Freshmen students have received partial (1-2 shots) or completed doses of the HPV vaccine. For those who received the vaccine, 45% reported that they were told by their parent and 43% were told by their doctor. For the 147 students who did not receive the vaccine, 28% reported that they are still not sure to get it and 20% need more information. Their main reasons for not receiving the HPV vaccine were: their doctor did not mention the vaccine to him/her (44%), he/she never knew about the vaccine (18%), and they don't know enough about the vaccine (17%).

Discussion/Conclusion: Although the HPV vaccine has been available for 13 years, young adults remain unvaccinated. Freshmen students reported that they are informed about the vaccine,

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but were not vaccinated because of the lack of parental and/or healthcare provider recommendation. With no active education campaigns in Hawaii promoting the HPV vaccine at college campuses, a first step to increasing vaccination rates is to develop a health education campaign to inform students of the HPV vaccine and its availability at campus clinics and neighboring pharmacies.