

## **KZN Health MEC urges parents, guardians to fight cervical cancer by signing up for Human Papilloma Vaccination**

In South Africa, cervical cancer is diagnosed in more than 7 700 women each year, with more than 4 000 of them dying annually of the disease. This type of cancer is caused by the Human Papillomavirus (HPV), the most common viral infection of the reproductive tract.

In a bid to mitigate the impact of this, the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Health, in partnership with the KZN Department of Basic Education, is embarking on a massive campaign from 3 – 28 August 2016 to provide the Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) Vaccine among school-going girls aged 9 and 10 in Grade 4.

The HPV vaccine can prevent most genital warts and most cases of cervical cancer and this protection is expected to be long-lasting. Nevertheless, vaccinated women still need cervical cancer screening because the vaccine does not protect against all HPV types that cause cervical cancer.

KZN Health MEC, Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo, says: “The purpose of this intervention is to implement one of the four basic components of cervical cancer control, which is primary prevention. The others are early detection through information and awareness, screening programmes, diagnosis and treatment including palliative care as guided by the World Health Organization (WHO) Comprehensive Cervical Cancer Control (2006).

The introduction of the HPV Vaccine is a significant public health milestone for our province, which is expected to significantly contribute to the control of women’s cancer and reduce associated mortality.”

As part of raising awareness on cervical cancer, MEC Dhlomo launched the Phila Ma Campaign, which seeks to assist women in accessing breast and cervical cancer screening, health education and other services. This is to encourage early detection and adoption of health-seeking behaviour.

MEC Dhlomo is urging mothers and guardians of young girls to sign consent forms so that HPV vaccine can be given to young girls.

“The HPV vaccine can prevent most cases of cervical cancer in females, if given before a person is exposed to the virus. Two HPV vaccines, Gardasil and Gardasil 9, can prevent many cases of vaginal and vulvar cancers in women, as well as most cases of anal cancer and genital warts in both females and males. The best way a person can be sure to get the most benefit from HPV vaccination is to complete all three doses before being exposed to HPV infection.”

However, MEC Dhlomo warns that women should still get regular Pap smear tests in addition to receiving the HPV vaccine.

ENDS

Issued by Corporate Communications: KZN Department of Health.