

The Crisis in the School Immunization Programs:

Role of Advocacy & Collaboration

Dr. Vivien Brown MDCM, CCFP, FCFP, NCMP
Dr. Christine Palmay, MD, CFPC



Our newsletters have now been created bi-monthly for the last 18 months, and we are excited to move forward in the advocacy to prevent HPV, despite COVID-19, shutdowns, stress in the healthcare system, and overall fatigue.

Why? Because cancer won't wait. Not for a better time.
Not for more energy. Not for more staff.

The past two and a half years have highlighted the value and impact of collaboration. We have learned that it is essential to have all hands on deck, all messaging unified, and all providers (doctors, pharmacists, and nurses) onboard. One of the most important collaborations in the world of immunization is with Public Health. We have learned many undeniable lessons during the COVID-19 pandemic: respect, understanding, and appreciation for Public Health.

Public Health, however, has been overwhelmingly busy and preoccupied with COVID-19. As a result, areas such as HPV vaccination in the school system in Ontario were halted, similarly in other provinces with variable timetables and options. This was a reasonable allocation of urgent resources as the pandemic erupted. Yet, the tumultuous decline in the immunization program, notably in Ontario, is now most concerning. As previously discussed in Newsletter #8, school vaccination rates fell below 1% in 2021.

With the start of the 2022-2023 school year, what can we expect and how do we move this agenda forward? According to a small number of public health units surveyed in Ontario, there is a preliminary plan in place. Out of 34 health units surveyed, only eight fully responded to questions, leaving 92% of students in the grade seven year in precarity. As a result, in the school system this coming fall, we are likely to see some in-school clinics, some community-based clinics, and some units with a hybrid plan for both; while a number of schools will still have their in-school program halted and some public health units will still be in the planning stages without certainty of results. For the public, this is very difficult as there is no unified plan and no clear guideline for what to expect and when and how children will be vaccinated.

Additionally, there is no set plan and provided information for children who have missed the vaccine in the last two years to catch up.

Outside of the school system, there may indeed be an excellent plan in place in an individual, local public health unit. Yet, with many players available, issues of information transference persist while resources are not being fully utilized. Children may have been vaccinated by their family doctor; however, no public health record has tracked this. As well, pharmacists, available and open for business, do not have access to the stock of public health vaccines and therefore, are a resource lying in wait. As primary care providers, we need access to both vaccines and records in order to be clear and proactive as to who needs which vaccination, who is partially immunized, and who remains at risk.

We all need to help build vaccine confidence, which requires a consistent message and a consistent program, not a variable one in each health unit. By standardizing awareness campaigns, having both the Ministries of Health and Education on the same page, and using the same message across the province and indeed the country, we can amplify the call to action with a clear and reliable implementation plan whatever the postal code.

*Learn from
yesterday. live
for today.
hope for tomorrow*
- Albert Einstein

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What are the next steps?

As individual physicians, nurses, and clinic staff, we should be proactive. We need to focus on immunization particularly in this age group. Depending on the province, for students going into in grade eight and nine (in Ontario), what is the plan for catch up, and do they, and their parents, know about it? This is the time to use our EMRs, identify the ages involved, and follow up to ensure patients have not fallen through the wide crack in the current system.

They are entitled to be immunized.

They are entitled to be protected.

They are entitled to be offered the best protection against a vaccine-preventable cancer.

They deserve to be taken care of now versus being treated later. This call to action is all our responsibilities. The time to act was yesterday... but today is not too late.

Resource Of The Month

[Learning for Good: Kids Boost Immunity](#)

Kids Boost Immunity (KBI) is a free World Health Organization accredited online educational resource for schools that pairs local learning with a global reward: vaccines for children in need through UNICEF. Offered in both official languages, KBI's 350 online lessons on a broad array of subjects align to provincial education curriculums across Canada for grades 4-12. Each lesson includes a quiz that enables Canadian students to earn and donate a vaccine for a child in support of UNICEF Canada.

Do you know a teacher? Let them know about this free resource so students can become better informed about vaccination while becoming global citizens!



Around The Globe

The World Health Organization has recently published Guiding Principles for recovering, building resiliency, and strengthening of immunization in 2022 and beyond (insert hyperlink in comments) Building on the core principles of Immunization Agenda 2030, this document leverages learnings from the COVID-19 pandemic and proposes a set of recommendations to strengthen routine vaccination programs across the life-course.

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Cancer won't wait

Help Prevent HPV and Cervical Cancer Now



Clinic Of The Month

University of Guelph Student Wellness Services:

J. T. Powell building,

168 Reynolds Walk,

Guelph, ON N1G 4Z8

Phone: 519-824-4120 ext. 52131

The University of Guelph (UoG) Student Wellness Services is stepping up to ensure that their 30,000 students are not left vulnerable to vaccine preventable disease including HPV related cancers.

Due to COVID-19 pandemic disruptions to school-based vaccine programs in Ontario extended eligibility (usually only free until the end of high school) for publicly funded HPV vaccine has been provided to all students born in 2002, 2003, and 2004. In spite of all the demands that clinics are facing during a pandemic, the Centre for Student Wellness teams are rising to the challenge and collaborating on a campus wide campaign to raise awareness of HPV infections and educating students on how to access their own public health vaccine records.

This innovative campaign includes sending emails or texts to students, running trivia events, social media information, and providing access to one-on-one education. For students accessing health services, every opportunity is provided to ensure all students are aware of all recommended vaccines and that their vaccine records are reviewed and up to date. Quick and easy access to campus clinic times is important for students, so targeted clinics along with ongoing ability to book vaccine appointments will be advertised and available. The overall goal is to put prevention at the forefront by ensuring that all students have informed, easy and equal access to HPV vaccine across the campus.

*Event
(webinar, podcast etc.)*

September 27th September 29th

School Immunization Program Crisis: Role of Advocacy and Collaboration

- Increase understanding how you can play a role in eliminating HPV related cancers in Canada
- Understand what is happening with school based programs across the country
- Identify solutions to increasing coverage rates

Dr. Brown as the speaker and
Dr. Palmay as the moderator.

HPV prevention week

Oct 2-8th, 2022

Hot off the Press!

One of KBI's newest signature lessons called [How To Handle Your Shots Like A Champ](#) helps Canadian students become better informed about the routine vaccines they receive in school and includes strategies to cope with anxiety around needle fears leading up to vaccination day. This includes a specific focus on the HPV vaccine with an emphasis on cancer prevention. After the lesson, students do a quiz to boost their confidence about getting vaccinated while earning a vaccine for a child somewhere in the world in support of UNICEF.



SCAN ME

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