



HPV vaccination among WLHIV – An Advocates Perspective

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Overview

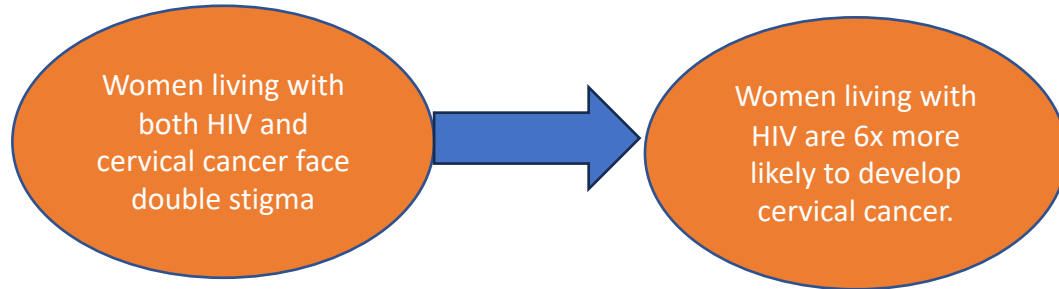
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Introduction

- Cervical cancer diagnosed in a woman living with HIV is an AIDS-defining illness yet it is largely preventable if the human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine is provided to girls and generally curable if diagnosed and treated early.
- It is the most common cancer among women living with HIV globally
- Women with any HPV infection have 2x higher risk of acquiring HIV than women without HPV infection and have high risk of persistent HPV infection (I lived with pre-cancer cells for years)
- UNAIDS reported that, an estimated 5% of all cervical cancer cases are attributable to HIV. In nine countries in Southern Africa, more than 40% of women diagnosed with cervical cancer are women living with HIV.
- Every year, more than 260 000 women—almost 90% from low- and middle-income countries die, needlessly, from cervical cancer because of inadequate health systems.
- The benefits of life-saving advances (screening and vaccines) are not reaching all women and girls with HIV or equitably, particularly those living in the poorest regions of the world, which are worst affected by HIV, cervical cancer and noncommunicable diseases.

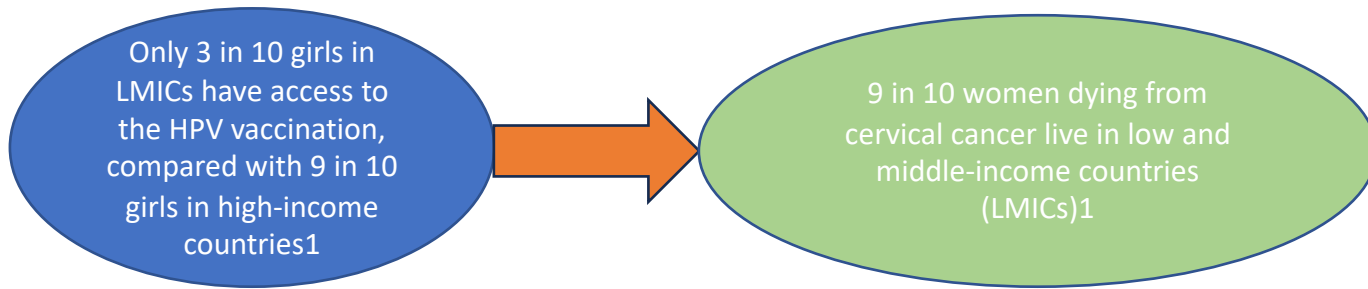
HPV and Women with HIV

HPV and women living with HIV



A study done in South Africa reported 28.5% (119/417) HPV prevalence, and HIV-positive women had significantly higher HPV prevalence than HIV-negative women. Of the 417 participants, 37.2% (155/417) were HIV-positive, and 96.1% of the HIV-positive women were on antiretroviral drugs (Taku *et al.* 2020)

Access to HPV vaccination- Morbidity and mortality



Policies Vs Programs

- Global AIDS Strategy 2021–2026 has prioritized people-centred and local-context specific integrated services, including for cervical cancer, for ending the AIDS epidemic by 2030.
- After more than three decades of the AIDS response there is encouraging progress. More people living with HIV than ever before are accessing life-saving antiretroviral treatment. The number of AIDS-related deaths has declined and fewer babies are being born with HIV.
- Billions are invested to save lives from aids related deaths, but we are allowing cervical cancer to kill women with HIV right under our nose (preventable deaths). We are slowly losing all the gains that were or are made from the HIV investments
- We lost many women in early 2000's due to aids and lack of access to treatment. Are we ready to lose more and have an increase in the number of orphans and child headed families.? We are slowly heading to another epidemic!
- Countries are mandated/instructed to reach 95 95 95 UNAIDS targets (HIV testing- ART initiations-Viral Load suppression) and more countries are on track. Why are we not setting same targets to control cervical cancer among women with HIV? We are a reactive nation NOT proactive?

Women's access to prevention, treatment and care for cervical cancer is a human rights issue!



Key points- HPV Awareness Day (9 March)

“With [women living with] HIV, there’s an increased risk of developing pre-cancerous lesions and an increased risk of developing cervical cancer. HIV-positive women with cervical cancer also have a poorer prognosis,” Williamson said.

“I think we should have a policy in the country that when someone is diagnosed with HIV, they should be vaccinated [against HPV] immediately.”
said Professor Williamson

CALL FOR ACTION

- Use existing health-care delivery systems as a platform to expand cervical cancer prevention screening and treatment and take HPV vaccination to scale for WLHIV.
- Offer screening for cervical precancer and cancer to women and girls who have initiated sexual activity and tested positive for HIV, regardless of their age.
- Rescreen women living with HIV whose screening results are negative (no precancer) periodically
- Provide free HPV vaccines for women with HIV and free treatment for women who are diagnosed with pre-cancer cells
- Establish multi-sectoral technical working groups in countries where HIV and HPV prevalence is high and let women with HIV lead programs and inform policies
- Fund community based STI and HPV Literacy programs to creation demand and improve knowledge
- Provide resources for community-based integrated POC (HPV, HIV and SRHR) services to enhance early detection of HPV among women and girls with HIV
- Member States to ensure that women have access to comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services and information, including services related to HPV and cervical cancer.



THANK YOU!