

PRESS RELEASE

No: 479/2018

Date: 21st August 2018

HPV Vaccinations

Her Majesty's Government of Gibraltar is pleased to announce that it is extending the programme of vaccination against the Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) to adolescent boys, following recommendations of the Medical Advisory Committee and subsequent advice by the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) in UK.

The HPV Vaccine is primarily used to protect girls and women from cancer of the cervix, a disease that on average affects about two women every year in Gibraltar. Gibraltar has had a population-based programme since 2012, offering vaccination to all girls from the age of 12 years. The vaccine has been received well, and Gibraltar enjoys a very high uptake, with over 90% of the girls opting to receive it. The vaccine used is also effective in preventing genital warts and other tumours caused by the same virus. The programme will now be extended to include boys commencing entering Year 8 in September of this year.

There are clear health benefits in vaccinating boys, with research indicating that the HPV vaccine is both safe to administer in boys, and generates comparable immunogenicity to that seen in girls. A programme to vaccinate adolescent males would provide those vaccinated with direct protection against HPV infection, and associated disease including anogenital warts, anal, penile and oropharyngeal cancers. It is estimated that in the UK there are over 1000 cases of cancer per year affecting men, which could be prevented with the HPV vaccine.

The GHA's Medical Director, Dr Daniel Cassaglia, said: "We are privileged to be able to extend our immunisation programme to protect boys from HPV infection. We anticipate that this will prevent cases of certain types of cancer in future. The GHA agreed with the clinical advice of Medical Advisory Committee. The Medical Advisory Committee is an important forum for medical staff to advise the GHA on medical matters of public interest. The GHA would like to thank the committee for their hard work and commitment to quality improvement, best practice and best patient care."

Minister for Health, Care and Justice, the Honourable Neil F. Costa MP, added: "I am happy to note that we are extending the current HPV vaccinations programme to include adolescent boys, following the clinical advice of the Medical Advisory Committee. I am very pleased to be extending the programme to include a wider section of our community, and help safeguard more individuals

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against HPV infection and associated diseases. I would like to sincerely thank Dr Cassaglia, the Department of Public Health, our Nursing staff at the Primary Care Centre and our Pharmaceuticals Department, for their work and collaboration in further developing this important service.”