

Telethon Institute for Child Health Research

NEW VACCINE MAY PROVIDE BROADER PROTECTION AGAINST CERVICAL CANCER

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Just under 150 Perth women have contributed to major international research at the Telethon Institute for Child Health Research that has proved that the new Cervarix vaccine provides broader protection against cervical cancer.

The results, published today in the prestigious international journal *Lancet*, show that while the vaccine provides effective protection against high grade cervical pre-cancerous lesions caused by human papillomavirus (HPV) types 16 and 18, it also demonstrated additional protection against infectious from other strains of HPV that account for another 10 percent of cervical cancers.

The Perth component of the international study was conducted by the Vaccine Trials Group at the Telethon Institute for Child Health Research in collaboration with Princess Margaret Hospital and King Edward Memorial Hospital.

Report co-author Dr Rachel Skinner, who headed the Perth trial, said the results were very encouraging.

"We have found through this study that this vaccine is extremely effective in the prevention of pre-cancerous disease of the cervix due to infection with HPV types 16 and 18," Dr Rachel Skinner said.

"However we now have evidence that Cervarix offers women broader protection by providing some protection against infections caused by HPV types 45 and 31. These types together with HPV types 16 and 18 account for 80 per cent of cases of cervical cancer worldwide.

"Not only will vaccinated women potentially benefit from a high level of protection against cervical cancer, they will also benefit from a reduction in abnormal Pap smears. However it is crucial that women who choose vaccination continue with regular Paps as the vaccine does not provide complete protection against cervical cancer."

The international study is the single largest cervical cancer vaccine efficacy study with over 18,000 women aged 15-25 years involved from all corners of the globe, including Europe, Asia Pacific, Latin and North America and women from six centres throughout Australia.

The Therapeutic Goods Administration has now approved Cervarix for women aged 10-45 years, making it the first vaccine in Australia available for women over the age of 26 years.

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Please note: Dr Rachel Skinner and a young woman who participated in the trial are available for interview and/or photo opportunities.

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