



LGBT HEALTH

KNOWLEDGE AND ACCEPTABILITY OF HPV VACCINE AMONG MSM IN LEBANON: A QUALITATIVE STUDY

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Introduction : Some countries specifically recommend HPV vaccination for MSM up to 26 years of age. In Lebanon, free HPV vaccine is not administered. The purpose of this exploratory study was to characterize the knowledge and beliefs of Lebanese MSM regarding HPV vaccination.

Material and methods: Participants through contacts of MSM consulting an STD clinic in Beirut-Lebanon were recruited. In-depth interviews used questions and probes on vaccine knowledge, acceptability, social and community concerns.

Results: Fifteen in-depth interviews (15 MSM) were conducted. In general, there was confusion among the majority of participants whether HPV vaccine cures, treats, or prevents. Some participants had previously heard about the HPV vaccine but the majority had not known about it. Reasons mentioned for accepting the vaccine were the prevention of genital warts and related cancers; and avoiding infecting others with HPV. Vaccine cost was mentioned as a major factor related to vaccine uptake. Several participants thought receiving the vaccine would encourage condom use to avoid other STDs including HIV. Other participants predicted increased sexual risk-taking due to a bolstered sense of safety. None of the participants mentioned any stigma or social issue with this vaccine.

Discussion: The chief finding is that the acceptability of a preventive HPV vaccine was widespread but not universal among these populations depending on a range of factors. Although HPV vaccination was incorrectly perceived as therapeutic, reasons for wanting HPV vaccination centered on self-protection and the protection of sexual partners. Chief among the barriers to HPV vaccination was the cost of the vaccine rather than the vaccine-induced reactions as has been mentioned in previous studies. Thus, HPV vaccination for MSM will be out of reach except for the few who can pay for it unless either all adolescent boys (regardless of sexual and gender orientation) are included.

