



SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT NEEDS TO HEED PUBLIC HEALTH ENGLAND'S STANCE ON HPV VACCINATION FOR BOYS SAYS THROAT CANCER FOUNDATION CHIEF

A change in policy would protect around 400,000 boys each year who are currently exposed to the risk of HPV infection and the range of diseases caused by the virus, including several types of cancer

The founder of a Falkirk-based national throat cancer charity has broadly welcomed a decision made by the UK Government's Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) that a universal vaccination programme protecting boys against human papillomavirus (HPV) is cost effective.

This decision paves the way for the Government, through Public Health England, to extend NHS funding which has supported HPV vaccination in adolescent girls since 2008.

However, the charity's founder has called for the Scottish Government to begin planning the vaccination programme as a matter of high urgency, so arrangements can be made with NHS Scotland to vaccinate boys against HPV before they reach their teens.

HPV has been recognised as the cause of nearly all cases of cervical cancer in girls and is increasingly acknowledged as the cause of a dramatic increase in cancers which affect the throat, which is why a 'gender-neutral' vaccination programme, equally applying to adolescent boys, has been called for.

Jamie Rae, founder of both Throat Cancer Foundation and HPV Action – a collaboration of 50 national healthcare charities and sexual health bodies that have steadfastly lobbied for equality in HPV vaccination - and himself a throat cancer survivor, is pleased the JCVI has recognised the importance of gender neutral vaccination giving parity to protect boys against HPV, but would like to see both the Scottish and UK Governments go further and implement the vaccination programme at an earlier age than the current 12-13 years old threshold for girls.

He comments;

"Today marks a turning point. The Scottish Government advised us that they have been awaiting this advice from the JCVI before moving forward with a universal vaccination programme. We sincerely hope they will now respond rapidly so everyone is protected from HPV at the earliest opportunity."

Recent figures have shown that rates of Throat Cancer caused by HPV are continuing to rise, and we need early-stage prevention strategies in place to protect all children from HPV-related cancers in later life.

There are around 200 types of HPV, and it is therefore a common and highly contagious sexually transmitted infection, however universal vaccination is about more than simply protecting against an STI – it is about protecting future generations from life threatening cancers.

Jamie Rae adds;

“Australia and a number of other countries have either implemented or recommended a gender-neutral vaccination programme and we believe that the UK should now follow suit. Our young men should not be exposed to a terrible, debilitating disease which causes long term suffering and can end lives.”

The Throat Cancer Foundation has been advocating the vaccination of boys since the JCVI began its assessment of the issue in 2013 and has been working with their partners at HPV Action to affect a change in policy, in order to protect around 400,000 boys each year who are currently exposed to this virus.

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Editor's Notes:

About - Throat Cancer Foundation:

The Throat Cancer Foundation was founded in 2012 by oropharyngeal cancer survivor Jamie Rae. Following his treatment and recovery, Jamie was concerned by the lack of resources and support available to people facing throat cancers and established the charity to provide what was missing: information and reassurance for those dealing with throat cancers.

The charity is dedicated to reducing the impact of throat cancers on individuals and wider society. It offers support, and aims to ensure that anyone affected, including the person who has cancer, their friends, and their loved ones, has access to the most up to date information available regarding their illness, the available treatments, and what to expect in recovery. The foundation's work is guided by a team of leading cancer experts and consultants working in the research and treatment of head and neck cancers.

The Throat Cancer Foundation is also a founding member of [HPV Action](#), which is a collaborative partnership of 50 patient and professional organisations that are working to reduce the health burden of HPV.

Website – www.throatcancerfoundation.org

About – HPV Action

The Throat Cancer Foundation is a founding member of HPV Action (HPVA), a collaborative partnership of 50 national healthcare charities, sexual health bodies and patient led organisations who work together to reduce the health burden of HPV. To achieve this, HPVA delivers an advocacy campaign that aims to achieve gender-neutral HPV vaccination.

Website – www.hpvaction.org

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