

## **MEDICAL EXPERTS URGE VACCINE FOR BOYS TO PREVENT THROAT CANCER EPIDEMIC**

New charity Throat Cancer Foundation launched today highlights 'ticking timebomb' of HPV which affects over 3,000 people per year in the UK HPV (Human Papillomavirus) causes 5% of cancers globally and throat cancer is the fastest growing male cancer

1 Former England captain Bryan Robson who beat throat cancer in 2011 adds his support to launch of the Throat Cancer Foundation

A new charity launched today (Friday 1 February) calls for the introduction of a vaccine for boys to prevent an epidemic of throat cancer. The Throat Cancer Foundation will give a voice to those affected by the disease and introduce a 'Gold Standard' of patient care.

The charity, which is backed by an influential group of over 150 medical experts, warns urgent action is required to prevent the UK being hit by a throat cancer 'ticking timebomb.'

Incidence rates of throat cancer are on the rise. Rates of oropharyngeal cancer (the part of the throat used for speaking and swallowing) in England and Wales have increased from 1,060 in 2006 to 1,780 in 2010. In Scotland, HPV related cancers have more than doubled in the past 20 years.

Throat cancer can be caused by HPV (Human Papillomavirus) – a common virus which lives on the skin and can be passed on through daily contact.

Although there is no cure for HPV, a vaccine currently exists which has been routinely given to girls in the UK since 2008 in an attempt to cut cervical cancer rates.

But the Throat Cancer Foundation urges the UK government to extend HPV vaccination to all 12 year old boys as well as girls.

1 See article in Nature magazine by Margaret Stanley, Director of Research in the Department of Pathology, University of Cambridge.  
[http://www.nature.com/nature/journal/v488/n7413\\_suppl/full/488S10a.html#authorinformation](http://www.nature.com/nature/journal/v488/n7413_suppl/full/488S10a.html#authorinformation)

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The new charity has the backing of medical experts who argue giving it to boys would reduce HPV infection and offer additional protection to girls.

The Throat Cancer Foundation says such a vaccine could cost as little as £45 per person, and save hundreds of lives.

2 The charity estimates that treating throat cancer costs the NHS as much as £45,000

per patient, not to mention the human cost in terms of blighted lives.

The Throat Cancer Foundation is being established ahead of the feast of St Blaise on 3 February, who is the patron saint of throats. It wants to highlight the causes, symptoms and prevention of throat cancers and ensure patients have a “Gold Standard” of treatment.

Professor Christopher Nutting, lead clinician in London, said: “We are seeing a rising number of cases of throat cancer in our clinics in the UK. We need to do all we can to raise awareness of this issue, so the launch of the Throat Cancer Foundation is timely.

“At the moment girls are routinely vaccinated against HPV but boys are not, meaning they are routinely being exposed to a virus that can cause life threatening cancers. “Evidence from Australia proves that HPV vaccination is effective; where a national programme led to a 90 per cent drop in cases of genital warts in men and women.

We echo the call for a universal UK vaccination programme for 12 year old boys and girls.”

Jamie Rae, Founder and CEO of the Throat Cancer Foundation, said: “Throat cancer is a ticking time bomb. Current HPV vaccination programme is discriminatory and a danger to public health.

“When I myself was treated for throat cancer in 2010, I was alarmed by the lack of information for patients. The Throat Cancer Foundation will tackle this need headon and give a voice to those whose lives are touched by this cancer.

“Our aim is to raise public awareness of the causes, symptoms and prevention of throat cancers and ensure patients have access to a “Gold Standard” of treatment as well as fighting to eradicate this type of cancer in future generations.”

Former football star Bryan Robson beat throat cancer in 2011, and welcomed the launch of the Throat Cancer Foundation.

2 Figures not available for UK so cost estimate based on Danish HPV immunisation programme.

The ex England captain said: “I was very lucky to receive a great deal of support from the public when I was diagnosed with throat cancer. But for many people it is something they have to fight on their own, so I welcome the launch of the Throat Cancer Foundation.

“We need to make sure everyone is well informed about the disease and that patients have access to the best care available. In my experience it’s important to be as positive as possible about the treatment required.”

The charity has also drawn the support of John Robertson, MP for Glasgow North

West. He said: "In the UK, one person is diagnosed with throat cancer every 40 minutes.

"We have a way of preventing it. The Australian government is already immunising boys and it is about time we did as well."

Medical experts say the rise in HPV related throat cancers makes the case for giving the HPV vaccination to boys more compelling. Giving it to boys would reduce the prevalence of the infection in the population by increasing "herd" immunity, offer added protection to girls, and prevent genital warts and anal cancer in both sexes. The Throat Cancer Foundation says that the benefits of blanket vaccination would now outweigh previous cost benefit concerns.

Professor Simon Rogers, Consultant Maxillofacial Surgeon at the University Hospital Aintree, added: "The Throat Cancer Foundation will highlight how easily HPV is passed between people, often during normal daily contact. We know from recent reports that HPV is behind the fastest growing cancer in men, causing five per cent of all cancers globally.

"The burden of HPV puts a substantial strain on the NHS, in terms of both cost and resources. If current trends continue unchecked, cases of HPV and oropharyngeal cancer will exceed cases of cervical cancer by 2020. The time for action has come."

Ends

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Issued by Weber Shandwick on behalf of the Throat Cancer Foundation.

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Notes for Editors

About The Throat Cancer Foundation

The Throat Cancer Foundation is a new charity dedicated to the prevention of throat cancers through research, education and vaccination. The charity gives voice to those whose lives are touched by throat cancer.

The Throat Cancer Foundation is lobbying for blanket vaccination against the Human Papillomavirus (HPV) strains which cause throat cancers. It is being established ahead of the feast of St Blaise – the patron saint of throats on 3 February.

The organisation is founded by Jamie Rae who beat oropharyngeal cancer in 2010 and set up the charity to highlight the dangers and effects of the disease.

The charity is chaired by Derek Stewart OBE who was treated successfully for cancer of the larynx in 1995 and is currently the Associate Director for Patient & Public Involvement at the National Institute for Health Research at the Clinical Research Network.

The charity is also led by a clinical and scientific advisory team comprised of some of the leading specialists in the field and includes:

- Professor Christopher Nutting, lead clinician of the Head and Neck unit and The Royal Marsden Hospital in London.
- Professor Simon Rogers, Consultant Maxillofacial Surgeon at the University Hospital Aintree.
- Professor Hisham Mehanna, Lead Clinician for Head & Neck and Thyroid Cancer at University Hospitals Coventry.
- Professor Margaret Stanley, Director of Research in the Department of Pathology, University of Cambridge.
- Professor Ian Frazer who helped develop the HPV vaccine in Australia with Dr Jian Zhou and himself administered the first HPV vaccination.

For more information see: [www.throatcancerfoundation.org](http://www.throatcancerfoundation.org)

#### About HPV

HPV is the Human Papillomavirus, a very contagious virus which lives on the skin. It affects 80 per cent of the population and generally accepted to cause almost all of the cases of cervical cancer in women. HPV is a leading cause of cancers of the throat, anus, cervix, vulva and penis and genital warts. Currently a significant proportion of the population are not protected against these life threatening illnesses. The burden of HPV puts a substantial strain on the NHS, in terms of both cost and resources but vaccination programmes have proved successful. For example the introduction of an

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HPV vaccine in Australia has seen a 90 per cent fall in new cases of genital warts among under 21 year olds.