

What you should know about the HPV vaccine

You may have seen recent television commercials by Merck & Co. promoting a new HPV (Human Papilloma Virus) vaccine, or heard reports on the news of some states possibly mandating this vaccine. In Texas, the vaccine has already been mandated by Governor Rick Perry. When he realized the bill was not going to pass, Governor Perry bypassed the legislature and issued an executive order requiring every sixth grade school girl in Texas to be vaccinated.

Although the goal of lessening the cases of cervical cancer caused by HPV is very noble, **the hard truth the commercials leave out is that HPV is a sexually transmitted disease (STD).**

The vaccine, Gardasil, is produced by Merck, and **Merck has unabashedly funded lobbyists working to mandate the vaccine.** Merck & Co. has used Women in Government, an advocacy group of female legislators around the country, to introduce bills to mandate the vaccine in several states. Is Merck giving these women all of the true facts? **With at least 20 states considering such bills, and Gardasil costing \$360 per child, Merck stands to make huge profits if these bills are passed.**

Governor Perry has ties to both Merck and Women in Government. He received \$6,000 from Merck's political action committee during his re-election campaign. One of the drug company's three lobbyists in Texas is Mike Toomey, Perry's former chief of staff. His current chief of staff's mother-in-law, Texas state Rep. Dianne White Delisi, is a state director of Women in Government. (Associated Press) Many groups are saying these relationships are too close.

Moreover, Gardasil does not actually fully prevent cervical cancer. So far, studies have followed women for only five years, and more research has yet to be done to discover how long the vaccine will last. While Merck claims that it will prevent 70% of the types of HPV that cause cervical cancer, **it only protects against the pre-cancerous lesions of 2 types of HPV, and two types of non-cancerous HPV that cause genital warts.**

There are actually 120 types of HPV, 37 are sexually transmittable and 19 of these cause cancer. The risk of developing pre-cancerous lesions is greatly increased by sexual activity before the age of 18, or multiple sexual partners. **The Center for Disease Control has urged that the only sure way to prevent HPV is to practice abstinence.** (cdc.org) Are we teaching our children the importance of practicing pre-marital abstinence?

Indiana legislators are discussing a bill involving Gardasil NOW. We must watch this bill carefully. **To find out the progress of the bill, call the House at 317-232-9600 or the Senate at 317-232-9400.**

Giving a sixth grade child a vaccine to prevent against an STD sends the message that we expect them to become sexually active in the near future. Even more dangerous is the fact that girls who receive the vaccination may believe that they are fully protected, when the truth is that they can still contract HPV and cervical cancer, or another type of STD. **Perhaps the greatest harm is that this open acceptance of sexual promiscuity could result in even more unwanted teen pregnancies and, given today's moral climate, more abortions of unwanted children.**