Addressing HPV vaccine hesitancy in Denmark

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HPV vaccination in the Danish childhood vaccination programme

- Part of the Danish childhood vaccination programme since 2009 and recommended to 12-year-old girls. Free until they turn 18.

- HPV vaccination of boys is not included in the programme.

- Four-valent vaccine used until 2016, when replaced by the two-valent vaccine due to a mandatory tender. Nine-valent will be introduced in November 2017
Dramatic decline in uptake of HPV vaccination

Uptake of first dose of HPV vaccine among girls by year of birth

Source: Statens Serum Institut
Decline caused by…

- Increase in the number of reported suspected adverse events (reported by both health care professionals as well as patients and their relatives).

- Group of girls and women experiencing diffuse and medically unexplained symptoms – suspect HPV vaccine is the cause.

- TV-documentary ”The Vaccinated Girls” linking the girls’ symptoms to the vaccine.

→ media attention and public concerns about vaccine safety
Information campaign launched in May 2017

• A low intensive and ongoing information ‘campaign’ primarily on Facebook and a designated website. The style is fact-based, informative and advisory.

• The main target group is hesitant mothers.

• Partnership behind the campaign: Danish Health Authority, the Danish Cancer Society and the Danish Medical Association.

• Printed material: Leaflet and posters targeted parents and daughters and material targeted health professionals, primarily GP staff.

• Workshops on how to talk to vaccine hesitant parents targeted nurses working at schools and at GPs are coming up.

• Encouraging network partners supporting the campaign to take part in the debate on the internet
• working with the national press and with social media bloggers
Tagline: “Stop HPV – stop cervical cancer”
Bringing back focus on preventing cervical cancer and dysplasia

– and putting faces on the statistics.
Status

1. A slight increase in vaccine coverage
2. A more balanced dialog in the national media
3. The Facebook page works as a platform for dialog with hesitant parents
4. Increased engagement on the internet from civil society and the medical community
Thank you!
Agenda

1. Setting: Dramatic decline in uptake of HPV vaccination among Danish girls

2. Summer 2016: Qualitative and quantitative study to inform information campaign

3. Launch of information campaign and the results up until now
However

Several high quality studies have not been able to document a causal relation between HPV vaccines and a number of serious conditions, including autoimmune diseases, POTS, CRPS, and chronic fatigue syndrome.

The reported symptoms for a large part remain unexplained, but nothing indicates that the vaccine is the cause.
Study to inform information campaign

Fase 1
Overview: Media analysis and stakeholders
Two focus groups with mothers of girls between 10-14

Fase 2
Decision patterns

Fase 3
Segmentation of target groups
Survey: 1000 parents of 10-18 year old girls

Fase 4
Development and testing of messages
8 duo-interviews with girls 11-14 years old
Survey to inform the campaign, 2016

1. Media landscape: polarized, little diversity, few key players
2. Prime decision maker in the family: the mother
3. 1/3 of the parents hesitant towards the HPV vaccine
4. The hesitant parents in doubt of essential facts
5. The parents wanted fact based information, but also admitted to react to emotional information on the internet
6. Wanting one voice form the medical community
Segmentation of the target group
(daughters between 10 and 14)
Hesitant mothers are the primary decision makers

They...

• Are less knowledgeable and in doubt about essential facts about HPV and vaccination.
• Understands the risk about cervical cancer but not the relative risk in relation to adverse events
• Were positive to begin with but have begun doubting after media attention
• Have a high confidence in their own GPs – but less than half have discussed HPV vaccination with them.
• Are very active on social media.
• Are awaiting more information before making the decision.
Which messages have the most positive effect?

- National and international HPV researchers agree: all vaccines have side effects but there are not more documented side effects to the HPV vaccine than other vaccines.

- 1 in 4 women under 30 years of age are infected with HPV and therefore particularly at risk of getting cervical cancer.

- 1 in 100 women gets cervical cancer, while only 1 in 1000 vaccinated girls have reported severe side effects that they think are related to the vaccine.
What’s new compared to earlier public health campaigns?

- A section about science and documentation
- References to scientific literature
- A long list of organizations supporting
- “Have you postponed your daughter’s HPV vaccination?”
Traditional patient pamphlet (incl. messages shown to have an impact)