

Human Papillomavirus

A qualitative study of Korean American female college students' attitudes toward vaccination

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BACKGROUND: Human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccines have the potential to reduce Korean American women's high burden of cervical cancer, but information is limited about their awareness of HPV and its vaccine.

OBJECTIVES: This study aimed to explore Korean American female college students' awareness of and attitudes toward HPV vaccination.

METHODS: A qualitative descriptive study was used. Five focus group interviews were conducted with 20 Korean American female college students aged 18–26 years from Massachusetts. Data were analyzed using inductive content analysis.

FINDINGS: Major themes were awareness, misunderstandings, attitudes, social influences, and cultural influence. A critical need exists to develop and implement culturally and linguistically appropriate HPV prevention education programs to promote HPV vaccination in this population.

KEYWORDS

awareness; attitudes; human papillomavirus vaccine; Korean American women

DIGITAL OBJECT IDENTIFIER

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HUMAN PAPILLOMAVIRUS (HPV) INFECTION IS THE MOST PREVALENT sexually transmitted infection (STI) in sexually active adolescents and young adults aged 15–24 years (75%) in the United States (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2014). About 99% of all cervical cancers are caused by HPV (CDC, 2016). Among these, 37% of cervical cancers occur in women who are aged 20–44 years (Viens et al., 2016). Despite the increasing use of regular cervical cancer screening and the availability of HPV vaccines in the United States (Adegoke, Kulasingam, & Virnig, 2012; CDC, 2016; Ho & Dinh, 2010; Miller, Chu, Hankey, & Ries, 2008; Wang, Carreon, Gomez, & Devesa, 2010; Yang, Mills, & Riordan, 2004), some subgroups of Asian American women are disproportionately affected by cervical cancer. For example, cervical cancer incidence and mortality rates are twice as high among Southeast Asian American women and Korean American women than among non-Hispanic White women in the United States (Fang et al., 2017; Torre et al., 2016). Although HPV vaccines have been found to be safe and have high efficacy (De Vincenzo, Conte, Ricci, Scambia, & Capelli, 2014), HPV vaccination rates are low in general, particularly among young Asian American women (Laz, Rahman, & Berenson, 2013; Reagan-Steiner et al., 2015). Asian American women aged 19–26 years were the least likely to receive the HPV vaccine (27%), compared with White women (46%), Black women (37%), and women of other races (47%) (Williams et al., 2016). Asian Americans are a heterogeneous population with unique cultural and socioeconomic profiles and language abilities among subgroups. Aggregating Asian Americans into one group may mask unique issues and problems faced by Asian American subgroups (Chen, 2005; Lee, Kiang, Kim, et al., 2015). To date, minimal research has been conducted regarding HPV vaccine uptake among Asian American women (Nomura & Rahman, 2014). To the best of the authors' knowledge, only one study assessed HPV vaccination among Korean Americans. Bastani et al. (2011) found that 24% of Korean American mothers reported that their adolescent daughters initiated the HPV vaccine, compared to 33% of Latina mothers.

Studies are scarce on HPV prevention behavior, knowledge and attitudes toward getting the HPV vaccine, and social and cultural aspects of HPV infection among Korean American female college students. Therefore, the current study targeted Korean women living in the United States, who are at