

Barriers to HPV Vaccination Among Korean Men in the United States

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Human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccination disparities may exacerbate the substantial racial and ethnic variations in rates of HPV-associated cancers. To reduce these disparities, special attention must be paid to increasing vaccine uptake among subgroups of Asian American men and women who are less likely to engage in primary prevention of HPV-associated cancers. Because nurses are often involved in vaccine discussions, they can play a critical role in improving HPV vaccine uptake by providing culturally appropriate and responsive messages to their patients.

AT A GLANCE

- HPV vaccination should be emphasized to male and female young adult populations to prevent HPV and HPV-associated cancers.
- This study highlights the importance of developing culturally tailored and evidence-based interventions to prevent HPV-related stigmas and promote HPV vaccine uptake among ethnic Korean men in the United States.
- Storytelling video interventions that capture stories of young, ethnic Korean men and women may be promising aids for promoting HPV vaccine uptake.

KEYWORDS

ethnic Korean men; attitudes; perceptions; human papillomavirus vaccination

DIGITAL OBJECT IDENTIFIER

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Human papillomavirus (HPV) is the most common sexually transmitted infection (STI) (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2018). Most HPV strains are asymptomatic or unrecognized. However, persistent HPV infection can cause genital warts, precancers, and cancers (e.g., cervical, penile, vulvar, vaginal, anal, oropharyngeal) in men and women (McQuillan et al., 2017). According to the CDC, the prevalence of HPV infection is higher in men than in women (McQuillan et al., 2017). Specifically, high-risk HPV-associated oropharyngeal cancers are more prevalent in men than in women and occur at a younger age than other HPV-associated cancers (CDC, 2018). Although HPV vaccination is safe and highly effective at preventing HPV-related infections and cancers, Asian women and men aged 9–26 years have low levels of HPV vaccine initiation (39.6% in women versus 26.4% in men, respectively) (Patel et al., 2018; Vu et al., 2020).

Asian Americans are a heterogeneous population with unique cultural, linguistic, socioeconomic, and religious profiles. Consequently, there is notable heterogeneity when cancer data are disaggregated by Asian American subpopulations (Medina et al., 2021; Tripathi et al., 2022). However, there are no data on HPV prevalence, and data on HPV-prevention behavior reflecting the introduction of the HPV vaccine in 2006 are not yet available for Asian Americans and among Asian American subgroups (Torre et al., 2016). In addition, the social and cultural aspects of HPV infection and prevention for Asian American subgroups has been largely unexplored (Vu et al., 2020). Given that many public health education models require accurate knowledge of the behavior and culture of the targeted population, this study targets one specific subgroup of Asian Americans—ethnic Korean men—to gain an in-depth understanding of HPV-associated perceptions in this sociocultural context.

Methods

Eight ethnic Korean participants aged 18–26 years participated in interviews between March 2018 and September 2018 in Massachusetts. Institutional review board approval was obtained from the University of Massachusetts Chan Medical School. A convenience sampling was used to recruit participants. The researcher (M.K.) and a bilingual Korean American administrative staff member recruited participants through the University of Massachusetts Korean Student Association and the Korean American