

Gardasil may not be as safe as FDA thought



Dnell Conrad/ Staff Photographer

A Lewis and Clark teen receives the Gardasil shot. Gardasil is a vaccine that defends against the Human Papilloma virus which can lead to cervical cancer.

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GONZAGA PREP

Today's teen girls are assaulted with news about their risk for cervical cancer and the Gardasil vaccine almost every time they turn on the TV.

"I want to be one less," is the slogan - combined with numerous messages about why it is "imperative" they receive this vaccine. But, is it imperative? Is it a perfect deterrent to HPV (the Human Papilloma virus) And, finally, is it without risks and side effects.

Merck, the company that makes and markets the Gardasil vaccine, claims that it has "virtually no side effects, just pain and swelling at the injection site." However, new research suggests that this vaccine may have more side effects than originally believed--or advertised.

The FDA approved the Gardasil vaccine in June 2006, and some believe that it was approved too quickly, and with too little research.

The National Vaccine Information Center released the following information during a press conference in June of 2006: "The FDA allowed Merck to use a potentially reactive

aluminum-containing placebo... A reactive placebo can artificially increase the safety of an experimental drug or vaccine in a clinical trial."

The Vaccine Adverse Events Reporting Systems (VAERS) has had 9,749 reports of adverse reactions to this vaccine, of those only 6 percent were listed as serious cases. These reactions included juvenile arthritis, rheumatoid arthritis, Guillian-Barré syndrome, and 21 instances of death, although VAERS could not establish a causal relationship between vaccination and death.

The Harvard School of Public Health recently completed a study to determine how cost-effective receiving the vaccine later in life may be.

"As you get older, the vaccine becomes less cost-effective," Jane Kim, the study's lead author said.

The study was published in the New Eng-

land Journal of Medicine, and written by Dr. Charlotte D. Haug.

"Published trials show an increasing trend of precancerous lesions caused by HPV stereotypes [strains] other than HPV-16 and HPV-18... [after a few more years of study] we will most likely be able to tell whether or not this is a true trend. If so, there is reason for serious concern," said Haug.

"It makes perfectly good sense to vaccinate males for HPV. After all, this is a sexually-transmitted disease and males can certainly be a vector for this infection. It makes good sense to vaccinate them. I do not know when this effort will begin, however."

The study also raises serious questions about the long-term effects of the Gardasil vaccine on the general public, such as whether or not women who receive the vaccine will continue to pursue annual cancer screening, which Merck still recommends for women who have received the vaccine.

On the flip side of the argument, many

doctors tout the benefits of Gardasil, and see virtually no adverse reactions. "It is too early to determine what kind of impact HPV vaccination will have on HPV cases, but articles have appeared in the [medical] literature suggesting that [the Gardasil vaccine] will be profoundly beneficial once a significant percentage of the population has been vaccinated," says Dr. Keith O. Reeves, a well-known OB-GYN in the Texas Medical Center.

When asked if he had heard anything regarding new, emerging research regarding a potential Gardasil vaccine for males as soon as 2009, Reeves replied, "It makes perfectly good sense to vaccinate males for HPV. After all, this is a sexually-transmitted disease, and males can certainly be a vector for this infection. It makes good sense to vaccinate them. I do not know when this effort will begin, however."

GlaxoSmithKline PLC, a well known maker of vaccines and other prescription drugs, has developed another HPV vaccine, "Cervarix," which is available in other countries; however it has not yet been approved by the FDA for distribution and use in the United States.

Rogers High School remodel completed



Rilee Yandt/ Photo Editor

Rogers High School sports its modern new look. The school finished its remodel last year.

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LEWIS AND CLARK

Many students ring in the school year with new clothes and supplies. This year, students at Rogers will also be getting a newly remodeled building. The construction project will render changes such as a new field house, renovated and new classrooms, improved locker rooms, a larger gymnasium, community use spaces, the replacement of the Industrial Arts and the cafeteria spaces, and a new Pittsburgh Street Annex Building. All of these alterations will modernize the 1932 art-deco style edifice and add a fresh feel to it.

"We're super excited," Rogers principal Carol Meyer said. "It's very cool." The remodel is all part of the \$165.3 million facility improvement bond started in March 2003. The plan, meant to improve the district, includes the modernization of three high schools, the replacement of three elementary schools, and updates throughout the area. The support of Spokane community funds all of the progress.

While indoor construction may not end until after winter break, signs of change are already scattered across the school. Technology such as new computers and plasma flat screen televisions have replaced the old, and the school's formerly undersized cafeteria and athletic facility now boast a large amount of space.

Joining these recent additions is the Wall of Remembrance, dedicated to the school's alumni. It was formed with bricks bearing the names of these alumni, who, Principal Meyer said, "are very involved. We have a great partnership with the alumni."

The school has already had a few celebrations for the remodel, and anticipates another in January, when the construction is complete. Staff and students alike are thrilled with the changes.

"It's so great. Our courtyard is beauti-

ful. We have amazing technology...We have a great athletic facility," Meyer said.

"The project is a way to start over for Rogers. Having a remodel really helps people feel good about themselves and their school," Kayla Fencl, a student who

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will represent Rogers on the school board this fall, said.

"I'm very happy about it; we love the new offices and space. The school is a lot cleaner now and the kids really like it," Nancy Scissons, a secretary in the public office, said.

"I'm really excited about how the exterior reconditioning turned out. The whole purpose of the remodel was to keep the tradition of the 1930's-style building," Greg Forcythe, the staff liaison, said. "We've really improved the school for the community, students, and staff."

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