



Media Contact

ASHA/NCCC Media Relations
P.O. Box 13827
Research Triangle Park, NC 27709
Fred Wyand
(919) 361 - 3124 (voice)
(919) 361 - 8425 (fax)
mediarelations@ashasexualhealth.org
nccc@ashasexualhealth.org

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January is Cervical Health Month
Cervical Cancer Prevention Requires Both Quality Healthcare and
Comfort in Talking about Sexual Health

Research Triangle Park, NC —The National Cervical Cancer Coalition (NCCC), a program of the American Sexual Health Association (ASHA), recognizes January as Cervical Health Awareness Month and urges every woman to make a New Year’s resolution to talk with their healthcare provider about cervical health!

Each year in the U.S. nearly 13,000 women are diagnosed with cervical cancer, and more than 4,000 die as a result. The disease takes an even greater toll globally as the vast majority of cervical cancers occur in low-income countries. In both the U.S. and abroad, cervical cancer is most often found in women living in poverty and who lack access to health care.

ASHA President Lynn Barclay says providing access to medical care is only part of the job, though. “It’s important that patients and providers both feel comfortable talking about sexual health, including cervical cancer prevention. These conversations are often rushed through or avoided altogether.”

Barclay says at its extreme, our lack of comfort with these topics even results in women avoiding gynecologic care due to a sense of shame. “There’s no single, simple solution to ending cervical cancer but it’s clear it involves more than just quality health care. When it comes to sexual and reproductive health we should be comfortable in our own skin, and have the confidence to seek the care and support we need. I urge every woman to talk with her healthcare provider about all of the prevention tools we have at our disposal: Pap and HPV tests and cervical cancer vaccines. One place to start is with ASHA’s guide, *Ten Questions to Ask Your Healthcare Provider about Sexual Health.*”

For the full array of Cervical Health Awareness Month materials, including social media resources and free downloads, visit the ASHA and NCCC websites. Also join our #CervicalHealthMonth Twitter chat on January 9, 2017 at 2:00 pm ET.

The American Sexual Health Association (ASHA) is a not-for-profit organization founded in 1914 to improve the health of individuals, families, and communities, with a focus on educating about and preventing sexually transmitted infections. ASHA's educational websites include: www.ashasexualhealth.org, www.iwannaknow.org (for teens and young adults), and www.quierosaber.org (Spanish language site).

Founded in 1996, the National Cervical Cancer Coalition (NCCC) is a program of ASHA and is a growing coalition of people coping with cervical cancer and HPV-related issues. The coalition primarily consists of women, family members, friends and caregivers, but also includes women's groups, cytotechnologists, healthcare providers, bio-tech companies, cancer researchers, and organizations providing cervical cancer detection programs. NCCC websites are www.nccc-online.org and www.giahc.org.

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