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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 American Sexual Health Association (ASHA) and the National Cervical Cancer Coalition (NCCC) recognize January as Cervical Health Awareness Month and urge every woman to make a New Year’s resolution have a Pap test!

Each year in the U.S. nearly 13,000 women are diagnosed with cervical cancer, and more than 4,000 die as a result. Cervical cancer is a profound health equity issue: in both the U.S. and abroad, the disease is linked strongly with poverty and lack of access to medical care, a fact all the more frustrating because screening tests (Pap tests and, when appropriate, HPV tests) and vaccines exist that give us the capacity to essentially eliminate the disease.

Access to these life-saving tools is crucial, and ASHA/NCCC President Lynn Barclay says we have programs in place to help. “Provisions of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA) require insurance plans to cover cervical cancer screening tests at zero cost to women,” she says. Barclay also points out that HPV vaccines, which are available for both males and females, are covered by the vast majority of health insurance plans. “Ensuring greater access to these tests and vaccines is not only the right thing to do, but also a wise, efficient way to spend our healthcare dollars,” she says.

Barclay explains that providing access to medical care is only part of the job, though. Changes to the field—including expanded use of HPV tests and the fact most women are no longer recommended to have an annual Pap—means that education and outreach are more important than ever. Barclay notes that a key part of our work is giving both patients and healthcare providers the information and tools needed in this new era of

cervical cancer prevention. “The landscape constantly changes and so must we. 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 Pap and HPV tests.”

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 12, 2016 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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