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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. Each year in the U.S. nearly 14,000 women are diagnosed with cervical cancer, and over 4,300 die as a result. The disease takes an even greater toll globally as most 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 health care provider about all of the prevention tools we have at our disposal: Pap and HPV tests and cervical cancer vaccines.”

For the full array of Cervical Health Awareness Month materials, including social media resources and free downloads, visit the NCCC website. Also follow our #CervicalHealthMonth social media outreach throughout the month via @StopHPVCancer.

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 and www.iwannaknow.org (for teens and young adults).

Founded in 1996, The National Cervical Cancer Coalition (NCCC) is a program of ASHA. NCCC is dedicated to serving women with, or at risk for, cervical cancer and HPV-related disease. The Coalition primarily consists of patients, survivors, family members, friends and caregivers, but also includes women’s groups, health care providers, cancer researchers, and other organizations. The NCCC website is www.nccc-online.org.

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