Late September saw the Michigan Senate approve two bills that will require girls in Michigan entering the sixth grade to be vaccinated against the two strains of the sexually transmitted virus human papillomavirus (HPV) that cause 70% of cervical cancers.

The two bills, if approved by the State Assembly, will mean that starting in the year of the sexually transmitted virus human papillomavirus (HPV) that cause 70% of cervical cancers will be eradicated in Michigan. By 2010, children entering the sixth grade will need to be vaccinated against the two strains of HPV that cause 70% of cervical cancers.

However, state senator Bev Demens (R), a critic of the HPV vaccine, argues that the vaccine is not effective enough to warrant mandatory vaccination for all 11- and 12-year-old girls. She believes that the vaccine is too expensive and does not provide adequate protection against HPV.

In contrast, Dr. Carolyn Runowicz, president of the American Cancer Society, believes that the HPV vaccine is an important tool in the fight against cervical cancer. She states that the vaccine is effective in preventing cervical cancer and that it is important to vaccinate young girls to prevent the disease.

The cost of the HPV vaccine is approximately $120 and €120 per dose in the United States and Europe, respectively. It is important to note that HPV is not just a sexual transmitted disease, and that the vaccine can be given to both boys and girls.

2. American Cancer Society. 2006. HPV vaccine recommended for girls aged 11-12; protects against virus that causes cervical cancer, genital warts. http://www.cancer.org/docroot/NWS/content/NWS_1_1x_HPV_Vaccine_Recommended_for_Girls_Aged_11-12.asp

Karen Honey

Nearly all cases of cervical cancer are caused by infection with an oncogenic strain of HPV. A new vaccine is now available that protects against infection with HPV16 and HPV18, the two strains of HPV that cause 70% of cervical cancer. Photo credit: Photo Researchers Inc.