

Irish medical leaders call for HPV vaccination for boys

The Royal College of Physicians of Ireland (RCPI) has called for teenage boys to be included in the human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccination programme in an attempt to reduce rates of HPV-related cancers, such as oral cancer, and to prevent infections.

The college held an event on 9 July 2018 at which it sought to raise awareness of the opportunity to eliminate HPV-related cancers with speakers including Professor Ian Frazer, the co-inventor of the HPV vaccine, and Professor Mary Horgan, President of the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland and a Consultant in Infectious Diseases.

HPV is the most common sexually transmitted infection worldwide, affecting around 80% of people both male and female, at some point during their lives, but the majority of them will not have any symptoms and will clear the virus spontaneously.

The virus can cause genital warts in others while persistent infection with certain HPV types can cause cancer of the cervix, cancer of the mouth and throat as well as other genital cancers, such as vaginal, vulval, penile and anal cancers.

The HPV vaccine has been shown to be safe and effective in both males and females and more than 200 million doses of the HPV vaccine, have been given globally. Some 20 countries have now introduced the vaccination for boys, including Australia where the uptake rate is up to 90%. In Ireland, the National Immunisation Advisory Committee has recommended that boys receive this vaccine.

The college is arguing that extending the HPV vaccine programme to boys is essential and should be urgently introduced.

Horgan said: 'Recent research to gauge awareness of HPV-related infections and cancers in men found that about 60% of Irish adults are aware that it can affect both men and women. And worryingly 87% believe they have never been exposed to the virus.'

During the event, Professor Frazer, who administered the first dose of the vaccine in Australia in 2006, gave an update and predicted that due to a comprehensive vaccination programme, including boys and girls, that the HPV virus would effectively be eradicated in Australia over a 20-year period.

Dr Corinna Sadlier, Consultant in Infectious Diseases who spoke at the event, said that as the burden of HPV-related disease was shared by both males and females, boys should also be offered the opportunity to receive the vaccine.

Sadlier said: 'While progress has been made in increasing HPV vaccine uptake rates in girls in Ireland which will confer some indirect protection to boys, we will not get to a point of elimination of this potentially serious infection without a rollout of vaccination and provision of direct protection to boys also.'

Horgan added: 'While the HPV vaccine is currently offered to girls to protect them against cervical cancer, it is essential that boys are also protected from cancers, such as those of the head and neck that are often caused by HPV infection.'

ASA ruling against ortho device firm

The Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) has ruled that marketing claims to support Aceledent – a device designed to speed up treatment – are misleading.

Aceledent is a hand-held oscillating device which can be purchased by patients wearing braces or aligners with the advice that the vibrations of the device help the teeth to move faster.

OrthoAccel Technologies Inc., based in Germany, claimed on its website that Aceledent could speed up treatment by up to 50% and that the device was clinically proven to reduce the pain and discomfort associated with wearing braces by up to 71%.

An NHS orthodontist complained to the ASA saying these claims were misleading and questioned whether they could be substantiated.

In its ruling¹ issued on 4 July 2018, the ASA said it had examined research and case studies provided by OrthoAccel Technologies Inc. and ruled that the claims could not be substantiated and were misleading.

The British Orthodontic Society welcomed the decision and its Director of External Relations Richard George said: 'This is the third time in the last few years that the ASA has upheld a claim of misleading advertising in relation to an orthodontic product based on the lack of good quality evidence.'

'Orthodontic treatment can take up to two years to complete and so the quest to speed up the process is understandable. However, what matters most is the quality of the treatment so that the best possible results can be achieved. The priority should be to see an orthodontist or a dentist with recognised enhanced skills who can meet your needs.'

1. Advertising Standards Authority. ASA Ruling on OrthoAccel Technologies Inc t/a Aceledent (July 2018). <https://www.asa.org.uk/rulings/orthoaccel-technologies-inc-a17-393373.html>.