



Human Papillomavirus (HPV) Vaccine

Relevancy

- ✓ G.S. Paper 3
- ✓ The human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine and issues related
- ✓ Statistics of HPV infection in India

Recently:

- ❖ The human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine has run into more trouble.
- ❖ In January, a Rome-based epidemiologist, Tom Jefferson, of the Cochrane Collaboration highlighted in a paper worrying gaps in published data on the vaccine, designed to prevent HPV-related cervical cancer.

What is the issue?

- Globally there are reliability debates over the efficiency of HPV vaccine.
- There is this concern because the drug manufacturers have been known to cherry-pick data to show safety.
- India has planned introduced the vaccine in its universal immunization program despite small risks of the vaccine.

What is HPV?

- Human papillomaviruses (HPVs) is an infection which can be easily spread through direct sexual contact, from the skin and mucous membranes of infected people to the skin and mucous membranes of their partners.
- HPV infection is so common, most people get HPV infections shortly after becoming sexually active for the first time.
- Low-risk HPVs can cause skin warts on or around the genitals and anus and recurrent respiratory problems.
- High-risk HPVs can cause cancer Cervical cancer, Anal cancer, Oropharyngeal cancers (cancers of the middle part of the throat).
- Most high-risk HPV infections occur without any symptoms, go away within 1 to 2 years, and do not cause cancer.
- Persistent infections with high-risk HPV types can lead to cell changes that, if untreated, may progress to cancer.
- HPV vaccination can reduce the risk of infection by the HPV types targeted by the vaccine.

Why HPV vaccine is under suspicion?

There are suspicions over the HPV vaccine that it may be causing a trio of rare illnesses like:-

- I. Postural Orthostatic Tachycardia Syndrome (POTS)- It is an abnormal increase in heart rate when a patient stands up.
- II. Complex Regional Pain Syndrome (CRPS) - It is unexplained, severe pain in a limb.
- III. Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (CFS) - It is debilitating tiredness that leaves patients unable to function normally.

All three are poorly understood conditions and often go undiagnosed.

- POTS and CFS sufferers may have other symptoms like nausea, sleep disturbances, and chronic pain.
- It is important to note that these are only suspicions, there is no evidence that these illnesses are caused by the vaccine.
- On the other hand, even if POTS and CRPS are shown to be caused by the vaccine, the incidence in vaccine recipients is likely to be very low.

What is the statistics of HPV infection in India?

- India has the largest burden of cervical cancer in the world and about 70,000 women die because of it each year.
- Around 70% of these cases are caused by infections from HPV strains, which the vaccines prevent.

What is India's stand over the vaccine?

- India is introducing HPV vaccines in its Universal Immunization Programme (UIP), by which millions of girls in India aged between 9 and 14 years will get the vaccines for free.

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- Given the rarity of the side effects and high burden of disease, India has taken the decision to go ahead with the vaccine.
- India senses that there is a small risk of the vaccine being linked to the syndromes, but the benefits outweigh the risks.



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Limited Succor: Budget 2018 And Senior Citizens

Relevancy

- ✓ G.S. Paper 2
- ✓ Incentives announced for senior citizens in budget 2018

Recently:

- ❖ The Finance ministry in this year's budget focused on providing economic support for India's growing population of senior citizens.

What are the Incentives announced for Senior Citizens?

- Government announced several tax and related incentives to ease the financial burden on people aged 60 and above.
- These steps are very welcome given that the elderly face steeply escalating health-care costs on declining real interest and pension incomes.
- Government announced a five-fold increase in the exemption limit on interest income from savings, fixed and recurring deposits held with banks and post offices to Rs. 50,000 and done away with the requirement for tax to be deducted at source on such income.
- These are welcome steps given that the elderly face steeply escalating health-care costs on declining real interest and pension incomes.
- Another useful tax change is the proposal to raise the annual income tax deduction limit for health insurance premium and/or medical reimbursement to Rs. 50,000 for all seniors.
- And a crucially allied step is the move to set the ceiling for deduction in lieu of expenses incurred on certain critical illnesses to Rs. 1 lakh, irrespective of the age of the senior citizen.
- The budget also proposed extending the Pradhan Mantri Vaya Vandana Yojana by two years, up to March 2020, and doubled the cap on investment in the scheme to Rs. 15 lakh

What should be the focus?

- With more than 70% of the 104 million elderly living in the rural areas, any serious initiative to improve the condition of senior citizens must incorporate adequate budgetary support
- The Budget provisions Rs. 6,565 crore for the pension scheme for the elderly poor
- But its outlay for the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment's assistance to voluntary organisations for programmes relating to the 'aged' at Rs. 60 crore is starkly inadequate

What could be done in the future?

- The number of the elderly in India is set to surge by 2050 to almost 300 million, or about a fifth of the population, hence the governments need to make more comprehensive efforts to address the nation's greying demographic.



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