Special Report:
NAO and the AHEC Network
Working to Increase HPV Immunization Rates
In September 2014, the National AHEC Organization (NAO) was awarded funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for a five-year project to provide education to health professionals regarding the Human Papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine. Selected AHEC entities across the country are currently working to increase awareness and train health professionals about the HPV vaccine in an overall effort to increase HPV vaccination rates for 11 and 12-year-old boys and girls.

The NAO CDC HPV project is an excellent example of the National AHEC Organization’s National Training Center (NTC), which coordinates a wide variety of national-scale population health trainings using the broad reach of the nation’s AHEC network, which extends to 85 percent of the United States’ counties or county equivalents.

In addition to the CDC HPV project, the NTC is currently:

1) coordinating training and community health education activities with five AHECs seeking to increase teen health information literacy in partnership with the National Library of Medicine and the Center for Public Service Communications

2) managing a project with five AHECs in partnership with the American College of Rheumatology related to training rural-based providers regarding lupus, especially regarding minority women who are disproportionately affected by lupus

3) working with the George Washington University Cancer Institute through the coordination of AHECs and community-based cancer-coalition roundtables

4) working closely with the Interstate Postgraduate Medical Association to, via the AHEC network, deliver educational sessions (with CME), to rural providers, offer patient education materials and clinician education materials related to venous thromboembolism (VTE).

There are a number of other population health projects in the pipeline that the NTC is currently exploring in partnership with other organizations and associations.
When the project wound down in February 2014, the AHECs had trained 13,298 civilian primary care, mental and behavioral health, and other providers, who attended continuing education (CE) programs offered by AHECs on this topic – far exceeding the initial project goal to reach 10,000 providers.

As NAO learned with the Veteran’s Mental Health Initiative and other smaller-scale national population-health provider education projects, the AHEC network, with a reach into nearly 90 percent of the U.S. counties or county equivalents, can quickly scale-up to meet project requirements given AHECs’ connectivity to community-based providers and collaborative partners.

It is precisely due to this ability of AHECs to address national-scale population health initiatives and conduct provider education in underserved rural, urban, and frontier areas that the NAO, in 2015, created the formal National Training Center structure, or NTC. The NAO leadership quickly came to realize that the “value proposition” of NAO and the AHEC network is that it has direct linkages and direct access to community-based providers in nearly all states, has affiliations with multiple academic health science centers and their leadership, and that AHECs are eager to respond and can quickly scale-up to meet provider education and community health education challenges in a way few national organizations can.

Since intentionally creating and utilizing the NTC, NAO and the AHEC network have been increasingly tasked to conduct provider and community health education regarding many important population health issues. I feel extremely confident that NAO and AHECs in nearly every state will be vigorously engaged in provider education initiatives via the NTC for many years, and that will ultimately improve the health of the nation’s most vulnerable individuals.

It gives me great pleasure to share this special report with you, which describes the NAO CDC HPV project in detail and demonstrates the reach and capacity of the nation’s AHECs in addressing a vitally important health care issue. I invite you to read this comprehensive report—and see firsthand the critically important work NAO and the AHECs are doing throughout the country to raise HPV immunization rates of 11 and 12-year-old girls and boys.

The National Training Center origins date back to 2011, when NAO was jointly tasked by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) and Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) to conduct provider education to impact the delivery of healthcare services in the civilian sector for veterans, service-members and their families coping with post deployment mental and behavioral health and substance abuse issues. The overarching goal of the initiative was to better serve returning soldiers and their families.
Giving Kids a Shot: NAO and AHEC Project to Promote HPV Vaccination for Cancer Prevention

Introduction

In September 2014, the National AHEC Organization (NAO) received funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for a 5-year project to provide education to health professionals regarding the Human Papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine. The purpose of the NAO HPV project is to increase awareness of the prevalence of HPV infections, associated cancers, and the CDC recommendations to administer the HPV vaccinations to 11- and 12-year-old males and females, as well as “catch-up” vaccinations for adolescents and young adults.

In addition to national and regional level efforts, existing state and local Area Health Education Centers (AHECs) were selected nationwide to provide the HPV outreach and education activities in their respective states under subcontracts with NAO. Along with outreach and education activities, AHECs have been working to increase awareness among clinicians of available HPV resources and tools in an effort to bolster a strong HPV vaccination recommendation and decrease the missed opportunities to vaccinate, thus raising HPV vaccination rates.

Trisha Schulz, BS
NAO HPV Project Manager

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NAO HPV Project Director

Need

HPV is so common that almost everyone will be infected with HPV at some point in their lives. Though most HPV infections go away on their own, some HPV infections persist. HPV infections that don’t go away can cause changes in the cells in the infected area, which can lead to genital warts or cancer. There is no way to know who will develop cancer or other health problems. Every year, more than 27,000 women and men are affected by a cancer caused by HPV—that’s a new case every 20 minutes.

Most of these cancers could be prevented by HPV vaccination at ages 11-12. However, HPV vaccine uptake rates remain far below the Healthy People 2020 goal of 80 percent and below those of other vaccines recommended for adolescents. According to data from a 2014 CDC report, only 38 percent of girls and 14 percent of boys age 12-17 years-old, were fully vaccinated for HPV. Achieving the highest possible HPV vaccination coverage rates not only has the potential to decrease HPV incidence and associated cancer mortality rates, but it also has the potential to establish herd immunity. Herd immunity (the resistance to a disease that develops in an entire community when a sufficient number of individuals are vaccinated) can provide a measure of protection for those who are unable to receive the vaccine.

Several factors have been identified that may explain low HPV vaccination rates. Because administering the vaccine to adolescents most commonly requires parental consent, some of the greatest challenges to HPV vaccine acceptance are parental knowledge, attitudes and beliefs.
Parental perceptions play a key role in the decision-making process; however, physician recommendations have an even greater influence on HPV vaccine acceptability. A strong provider recommendation is the most effective method of encouraging HPV vaccination among adolescents. Quantitative data suggest physician discussions and a strong physician recommendation together is “associated with a 93-fold increase in the odds of initiating the HPV vaccine series among a sample of women aged 19-26 years.” Although encouraging the use of strong provider recommendations has been proven effective in increasing HPV uptake, some physicians have expressed reservations and have been reluctant to recommend the vaccine to the intended population. In fact, previous research has found that nearly two-thirds of vaccine-eligible girls ages 11-12 remained unvaccinated for HPV after their routine preventive care visit, representing significant missed opportunities. Evidence suggests that anticipated parental disapproval, discomfort discussing sexual matters with young people, insufficient time to discuss HPV vaccination with a parent, and fear of religious and cultural sensitivities are all known barriers impacting a physician’s decision to recommend the vaccine.

NAO Project Model

In an effort to combat physician hesitancy and bolster a strong recommendation, NAO utilized existing infrastructure to adapt the National Training Center to develop and provide HPV-related training sessions to clinicians nationally using regional AHEC coordinators and the strength of the AHEC network. State AHEC entities were tasked with training primary care providers (pediatricians, family medicine physicians, obstetricians and gynecologists, registered nurses, nurse practitioners, pharmacists and physician assistants) on HPV vaccination, utilizing CDC’s “You are the Key” presentation and related resources. AHECs also trained health professions students in primary care fields. These trainings were provided in multiple formats including Grand Rounds presentations; educational presentations at local, regional and state health profession conferences; as well as webinars and online learning modules. To carry out this work, AHECs contracted with NAO in exchange for a financial stipend.

Ten regional coordinators were hired to connect states with relevant state and regional organizations and to establish strong connections with medical schools, share resources, catalog state-specific activities, and help state AHECs reach their training goals.

The work thus far has been enhanced and supported through national-level partnerships with other CDC-funded projects including: the American Cancer Society; the American Academy of Pediatrics; the Academic Pediatric Association, and the National Association of County and City Health Officials. State AHEC entities also used their own state and regional partnerships to strengthen and leverage efforts to provide HPV trainings to health professionals and encourage an active dialogue on HPV vaccination and its role in cancer prevention.

Continuing Education

AHEC state entities began planning and offering their continuing education (CE) programs in the spring of 2015. Since that time, health professionals in 44 states have received HPV education by AHECs participating in the project, with additional states being recruited. In the first 18 months of the project, a total of 259 programs for clinicians have been delivered, hosted or supported by HPV state entities with a total of 9,475 participants in attendance.

NAO provided regular online trainings to create a learning community that augments and enhances the overall project, as well as supplement trainings provided at the state, local and regional levels by the state AHEC entities. Not only did NAO provide regular technical assistance trainings for the regional coordinators and state AHECs, but a series of webinar trainings were also provided for health professionals. Online training topics for regional coordinators and AHECs included: project orientation; basic HPV; working with Postgraduate Institute of Medicine (PIM) for CE/CME credit; data collection and reporting; hosting a successful CE event; using survivor stories in presentations; Comprehensive Cancer Control; and using social media to reach healthcare providers. Two online trainings were geared toward clinicians and other healthcare professionals: “Countering HPV Vaccination Opposition” presented by George Washington University Cancer Institute and “You are the Key to HPV Cancer Prevention” presented by CDC.

NAO also worked with PIM to produce a “You are the Key to HPV Cancer Prevention” self-study module that allows health professionals to receive CE/CME credit. Credit was approved and made available to participants through the American Council for Continuing Medical Education (ACCME); the American Nurses Credentialing Center Commission on Accreditation (ANCC) and the Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education (ACPE). As of April 2016, 834 health professionals...
from all 50 states (and some foreign countries) have completed the self-study module. This same CE/CME
credit was made available to participating AHECs to provide accreditation to live or webinar presentations.

Along with providing continuing education for health professionals, another key component of the project is to
disseminate HPV resources. Professionals in busy medical offices don’t have the time to research the HPV
vaccine on their own. State entities distributed HPV educational materials through e-mail and social media, on
their own websites and in-person at educational events. Many also distributed educational materials through
partner organizations that in turn sent the materials on through their own distribution channels. Through these
efforts, HPV resources and educational materials had an estimated reach of more than 155,000 clinicians and
health professions students.

As a result of this project, several products have been produced. In partnership with George Washington
University Cancer Institute, a HPV resource guide and HPV environmental scan protocol was produced for
distribution with the AHEC network and with partners. State profile sheets were also produced by GWU to
explain the burden of HPV, as well as a social media toolkit for state AHECs to use in disseminating HPV
resources. All of the resources, webinars and products will continue to be made available through the project
website: www.nationalahec.org/hpv.

Conclusion

In the first 18 months of the project, AHECs and NAO trained 9,475 health professionals and
health profession students. A number of AHECs reported building new partnerships through
the project and enhancing existing partnerships to provide HPV training. It’s the strength of
the AHEC network that has made the NAO HPV Project a success thus far. NAO is continuing
this important project over the next several years and will be providing more resources,
trainings and technical assistance to support AHECs in carrying out this initiative – all in an
effort to give kids a shot – the HPV vaccine and a shot at a cancer-free life.

References

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As a new statewide AHEC program that is still in the infrastructure development process, forming new relationships is very important. The West Central Alabama AHEC (WCAAHEC) was the first of five regional centers established under the Alabama Statewide AHEC program, opening in 2013 with one staff member. Today, the staff of three has made tremendous strides to educate communities in West Alabama about the strength of the AHEC network and impact that AHECs can have on improving access to care for the state’s most underserved and rural communities.

Serving as the State Entity for the NAO-HPV-CDC project, the WCAAHEC staff has been able to form new partnerships (i.e. Alabama Chapter of the American Cancer Society, the Alabama Chapter of the National Cervical Cancer Coalition, UAB Comprehensive Cancer Center), that have not only allowed them to complete project objectives but has created new pathways to further implement core AHEC activities and help brand AHEC statewide as an important community-based partner.

In 2014, data from the Alabama Department of Public Health revealed that rates for HPV vaccination among teens living in Alabama were significantly lower compared to the national average. Only 39 percent of adolescent girls in Alabama, between the ages of 13 and 17 have received all three doses of the HPV vaccine, and only 9 percent of adolescent boys in Alabama have received the vaccine. The 2020 Healthy People goal is 80 percent for this age group.

In November 2015, the University of Alabama Birmingham (UAB) Comprehensive Cancer Center and American Cancer Society partnered to organize a statewide HPV Roundtable in Birmingham, AL. The purpose of the Alabama HPV Roundtable was to increase HPV vaccination coverage in the state. The roundtable coalition consisted of public, private, and

As a mother of a 12 year-old boy, this project was personal for me. I am a HPV parent supporter, advocate and health educator. My son has completed the HPV vaccination series and I enjoy sharing my story with providers who may be skeptical about how receptive parents may be. Most parents trust their provider’s judgment. Make the recommendation."

– Regina Knox, Executive Director

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West Central Alabama AHEC
non-profit organizations dedicated to increasing HPV vaccination rates. The collective goal was to reduce HPV-associated cancers and related deaths in Alabama over the next three years through coordinated leadership, strategic planning, and action. Designed to be a working meeting, the HPV roundtable involved in-depth discussions of strategies and developing a roadmap that will help guide promotion of HPV vaccination in Alabama focusing on three areas: education, research and clinical practice.

In an effort to strengthen AHEC’s role in the development and implementation of HPV projects statewide, WCAAHEC volunteered to host the 2nd Statewide HPV Roundtable on March 14, 2016 in Selma, AL. Twenty-four individuals participated representing the following organizations: the Alabama Chapter of the American Cancer Society; American Academy of Pediatrics-Alabama Chapter; Alabama Department of Public Health Immunization Division; Alabama Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program; Alabama Vaccines for Children Program; Alabama Medicaid Agency, Alabama Pharmacy Association; Alabama Child Health Improvement Alliance; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and other key stakeholders.

Special guests invited included Dr. Melinda Wharton, MD, MPH, Director, National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases, Achal Bhatt, NAO-HPV-CDC Project Officer, and Gretchen Forsell, MPH, RDN, LMNT, NAO-HPV-CDC Project Director.

One of the more important outcomes of the March 2016 HPV Coalition meeting was an innovative collaboration between WCAAHEC and the Alabama Department of Public Health Immunization Division to pilot four Regional Lunch & Learns that took place in May and June in Selma, Butler, Tuscaloosa and Carrollton. The one-hour continuing education programs for physicians, nurse practitioners, physician assistants, nurses, and office staff, featured a 20-minute overview of the Alabama state immunization registry (ImmPRINT) and the 30-minute CDC “You are the Key” presentation. WCAAHEC utilized an existing academic partner, The Deep South Center for Occupational Health and Safety, to obtain nursing CEUs at no cost, and recruited speakers that consisted of current community-based preceptors. The health departments provided use of the county health department community rooms. These pilot programs will allow WCAAHEC to gather information and evaluate the effectiveness of replicating this type of offering statewide. The partnership has been successful thus far and appears to be a promising practice.

Mitchell Cancer Institute in Mobile has offered to host the next coalition meeting, which is being planned for the Fall of 2016. Each work group (education, research, and clinical practice) will work on addressing the action items developed at the March HPV roundtable and share their progress toward accomplishing their goals.

Through these efforts, WCAAHEC and its coalition partners hope to see an increase in vaccination rates over the next two years for youth ages 11 and 12 in Alabama.
Florida HPV Programming: Training Rural Health Providers Through Online Education

Angela Babson knew something was seriously wrong when her toddler’s face turned gray. Terrified that the boy could not breathe, she rushed him to Regional Medical Center Bayonet Point. The doctors there agreed the situation was dire. They put him on a helicopter to All Children’s Hospital in St. Petersburg, Florida.

At age 3, James Babson would need surgery to remove growths from his vocal chords that were blocking his airway. The diagnosis, recurrent respiratory papillomatosis, a rare disease caused by Human Papillomavirus (HPV). "We had never even heard of it", Angela Babson recalled.

The respiratory illness is not the only serious health issue caused by HPV. The virus, which can be spread through sexual contact or during childbirth, can also lead to cervical and penile cancers, as well as cancers of the throat and mouth.

HPV is the most common sexually transmitted infection in the United States, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). With more than 40 types of HPV, many people do not know they are infected and subsequently do not know they are spreading the infection to others. According to the CDC, nearly 79 million Americans alone are living with an HPV infection. Every year, nearly 14 million men and women contract a new HPV infection.

These rates are so high that the question is not if a sexually-active individual will get HPV, but when will they get HPV, as most people will get at least one type of HPV infection at some point in their lives. In Florida, less than 30 percent of females, and less than 15 percent of males, ages 13-17, had received the vaccine as of 2014, according to the Kaiser Family Foundation. Through outreach to health professionals, practice staff, advocates and students, Suwannee River AHEC (SRAHEC) hopes to increase those rates of vaccination to 80 percent for both boys and girls ages 13-15 by 2020.

A HPV vaccine cycle works extremely well to reduce infections and, therefore, cancers. Doctors recommend vaccinating children between ages 11-12. Though the vaccines are effective up to age 26 for both males and females, the vaccine is most effective when given before any sexual activity or HPV infection has taken place.

A June 2013 study published in the Journal of Infectious Diseases showed that since the vaccine was released in 2006, the rates of HPV strains covered by the vaccine decreased 56 percent among females ages 14-19. The vaccine, however, does not come without its controversies. It is imperative that practitioners are educated on the efficacy of the vaccine, how to talk to parents about the vaccine and how to dispel myths associated with the vaccine.

In many areas of Florida access to quality continuing education programs is not readily available. Rural and underserved providers cannot afford to hire their own trained health information specialist or travel to attend continuing education programs. However, the need for quality education is growing and the impact of such services on healthcare outcomes has previously been demonstrated. Providing continuing education about the HPV vaccine is no exception.

Through StellaEd Solutions, an online learning management system for health education and training, SRAHEC is focusing on educating providers, health educators, students and other allied health professionals in its rural service.
area about the importance of the HPV vaccine because they have the greatest influence over a parent’s decision to vaccinate. To reach this group SRAHEC has utilized online learning to share the CDC-developed “You are the Key to HPV Cancer Prevention.” Two versions of the training are offered, one led by a physician specializing in head and neck cancers and the other led by a leading HPV research specialist at the Moffit Cancer Center in Tampa, Florida. The speakers used the slides provided and added their own comments to emphasize the benefits of the vaccine from physician and research points of view. These courses are available online through September 2017. SRAHEC has also obtained CE/CME credits for the HPV programming, so attendees are able to earn credit for their medical license, which is automatically reported to their Florida boards.

Suwannee River AHEC also hosted a live webinar using the CDC training in September 2015. This allowed individuals to ask questions to an expert, while still having the ability to take the course at their home or office. The live webinar was recorded and sent out to all participants to share with their partners and staff members, and was posted on StellarEd Solutions as a permanent course led by the HPV research specialist. The platform provides more practitioners access to current HPV information, news articles, announcements, and educational materials.

Suwannee River AHEC partnered with several organizations to plan the inaugural Florida Immunization Summit, in St. Petersburg, focusing on HPV on February 11-12, 2016. Staff assisted with conference planning, scheduling speakers and presentations, obtaining CE/CME credit and coordinating travel and hotel reservations for the conference, speakers and attendees. Well over 100 participants attended and received information on the importance of HPV vaccination, how to talk to parents, dispelling vaccination myths and teaching all practice staff how to actively promote the HPV vaccine.

Babson’s family and others are encouraged by the continued efforts to bring HPV awareness to the forefront. Her son James, now a teenager, has undergone more than 40 surgeries to remove growths from his vocal chords. He is in remission now, but there is always a possibility the growths will return. Babson has since become an advocate for the HPV vaccine.

“Had his father and I had the vaccine, we never would have had this experience,” she said during an interview at the Florida Department of Health in Pasco County office, where she works in the education department. "This isn't just a sexual health vaccine," she said. "This is something people should do for themselves and for their children.”

– Angela Babson
Providing HPV Education in Diverse Settings in Missouri

In 2015, the Northeast Missouri AHEC (NEMO AHEC) office was selected to take part in the National AHEC Organization’s HPV Project by forming partnerships and organizing trainings for health care providers throughout Missouri. The goal of the project is to provide education to health professionals and students in health professional schools regarding the Human Papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine.

By increasing awareness and training health professionals about the HPV vaccine, the overall effort is to increase HPV vaccination rates of girls and boys, ages 11 and 12. Through the Missouri AHEC (MAHEC) network of 10 offices, MAHEC is participating in the project to help spread the word that the HPV vaccination is the best way to prevent many types of cancer. As more providers and health care professionals realize how important and influential their recommendations are to parents and patients, more adolescents will receive the vaccine and be protected from related cancers.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), nationwide, 60 percent of adolescent girls and 42 percent of boys have received one or more doses of the HPV vaccine. In Missouri, the percentage for girls is 49 percent or less. Regarding adolescent boys, the rate in Missouri is even lower. Only 29 percent or less has received one or more doses of the HPV vaccination. The challenge is clear for Missouri health care providers and educators . . . raise the HPV vaccination rates so young people in Missouri will have healthier, more productive lives.

The MAHEC offices work with a variety of settings for healthcare providers and educational institutions. Through community networking organizations, MAHEC staff members work with local health departments, Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs), Critical Access Hospitals and regional hospitals, and health professional colleges and universities. Over the last eight months, more than 250 providers and students have participated in "You are the Key to HPV Cancer Prevention" training sessions. The training includes not only information about how the vaccine can prevent HPV-related cancers, but a variety of patient scenarios are given to prepare providers to address the concerns of parents of pre-teens and adolescents. Many parents need the information and reassurance that providers can give them to make informed decisions for their children to receive the vaccinations.

In order to reach a multitude of provider and health profession students in different settings, Missouri AHEC offices approached Continuing Medical Education (CME) offices at medical schools/universities, FQHCs, and regional hospitals. AHEC staff selected existing partners with whom they had coordinated other training programs. These contacts resulted in:

- Two out-of-state CME programs hosted by A.T. Still University (ATSU)/Kirksville College of Osteopathic Medicine (KCOM) in Kirksville, MO,
- Two Grand Rounds presentations at hospitals,
- Two noon lectures for medical students and community providers, and
- Training at an FQHC.

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Continuing Medical Education Programs

The ATSU/KCOM CME Department was contacted initially because they sponsor major annual primary care update programs in Missouri twice a year. Planning was already in progress for an ATSU CME-CE Cruise/Primary Care Update held on the Royal Caribbean-Jewel of the Seas, San Juan, Puerto Rico in January 2016. When the CME department chair was contacted and heard about the “You are the Key” presentation, he immediately scheduled this presentation for the Pre-Cruise Conference.

ATSU/KCOM provides CME opportunities for alumni to re-connect with their former classmates and other KCOM alumni. The program was attended by 37 physicians and one other professional representing Missouri and 16 other states. The evaluations from this presentation were overwhelmingly positive, with all of the evaluations noting agreement, or strong agreement, that the providers were better prepared to define the importance and rationale for vaccinating youth at ages 11 or 12.

Due to the success of the HPV presentation in January, a second HPV CME program associated with this project, “Reaching across the Spectrum through Interprofessional Teams”, was held during the ATSU/KCOM Primary Care Update, in Las Vegas, Nevada in March 2016. As with the previous CME program, KCOM alumni, spouses and friends made up the majority of the attendees. With an interprofessional theme for the program, the disciplines represented by the 108 participants were more varied and included physicians, dentists, dental hygienists, pharmacists, nurse practitioners, and physician assistants. Including Missouri, 23 states were represented and each participant received a fact sheet about HPV statistics in their home state, as well as handouts from the CDC.

The evaluation responses again were very positive noting agreement that the “You are the Key” presentation was meaningful, relevant and provided practical suggestions to recommend the HPV vaccine.

Hospital Grand Rounds

Ground rounds are ideal to provide “on-the-job” training for medical students, residents, physicians and nurses at hospitals. The Grand Rounds HPV presentations were presented to interdisciplinary audiences including St. Louis University School of Medicine (SLU-SOM) faculty members, hospital residents, medical students, physicians, and nurse practitioners.

In October 2015, at Mosaic Life Care in St. Joseph, a nurse practitioner presented “You are the Key” during a noon presentation and received requests for updates in the future. In May 2016, the Grand Rounds HPV lecture was presented by a Family Medicine physician and faculty member at SLU-SOM. Forty-nine professionals attended this lecture sponsored by the SLU-SOM Department of Family and Community Medicine.

Training Medical Students

As a leading health sciences university, ATSU encompasses colleges and schools in medicine, dentistry, health sciences, and graduate health studies. ATSU is the founding institution of osteopathic healthcare. NEMO AHEC partners with ATSU/ KCOM to provide training opportunities outside the standard curriculum. Osteopathic medical students throughout Missouri have had opportunities to attend the “You are the Key” presentations to learn more about the HPV vaccine and the challenges of encouraging parents and young people to get the vaccine at the ideal time.

In October 2015, during the National Primary Care Week celebration on the ATSU/KCOM campus in Kirksville, a panel of health care professionals presented the “You are the Key” presentation and allowed time for a question and answer period. The audience was mainly 1st and 2nd year medical students; however, a few students from other health professions and KCOM faculty also attended. Nursing, health science, exercise science, athletic training and communication disorders students were invited from nearby Truman State University.

Providing these opportunities for health care professions students is key to preparing them for their future interprofessional interactions with patients in all areas of public health, especially preventive health.
The panel members included physicians in Family Medicine, OB/GYN, and Pediatrics, plus a registered nurse from the local county health department. Each panel member spoke to the students about how the HPV vaccine is recommended to parents/patients in their specialty.

The interest from the audience was high with many questions about specific patient scenarios and how to deal with difficult cases. This panel of professionals was so well received that they were asked to repeat the presentation in February 2016 at the Northeast Regional Medical Center in Kirksville. The lecture was also broadcast live to hospitals in Joplin, St. Joseph, and Cape Girardeau. Forty-six people attended, including hospital staff and KCOM third and fourth year medical students at their core rotation hospital sites.

The multi-disciplinary approach was a well-received and effective method of delivery for the presentation. Each presenter was able to provide their own unique experience in the field as it related to HPV and HPV prevention. Evaluations of the presentation again provided positive feedback.

Many attendees agreed that as a result of the training, they would implement at least one change to improve their practice or patient care to increase HPV vaccinations. One attendee even commented, “Great job. I learned a lot and learned how to talk to stubborn momma bears.”

Training for Federally Qualified Health Centers

Missouri AHEC also targets FQHCs which welcome training for their providers. Physicians, nurse practitioners and a pharmacist participated in the HPV training presented at a quarterly staff meeting in April at the Remington Nature Center in St. Joseph, Missouri.

Ninety-two percent of the attendees indicated they either agreed, or strongly agreed, that this training better prepared them to describe the burden of HPV disease and the rational for vaccinating youth at ages 11 or 12.

For MAHEC, the next HPV training session is scheduled for the University of Missouri School Of Medicine (MU SOM) Grand Rounds on August 5, 2016. The unique aspect of this program is that “You are the Key” will be presented live and will be broadcast to several telehealth sites in rural Missouri.

Technology allows rural physicians and other health professionals to access continuing education sessions without traveling long distances. MAHEC is working with the CME office at MU SOM for logistics and connections to the rural hospitals and clinics. It is estimated that MAHEC will reach 75-100 providers with this presentation.

Missouri’s 10 AHEC offices have shown a great deal of teamwork, statewide, to promote the HPV project. Eight of the 10 offices have either hosted or plan to host a HPV training event. Through these combined efforts, the MAHEC system hopes the goal of increasing the HPV immunization rates in Missouri will become a reality.

References:
High Sierra AHEC and Immunize Nevada Working Together to Increase HPV Immunization Rates Through Health Provider Education

Heidi Parker, Executive Director of Immunize Nevada, states that in 2014, only 33 percent of adolescent females and 16 percent of adolescent males in Nevada had completed the three-dose series. These rates fall considerably short of the Healthy People 2020 objective of 80 percent of 13-15 year olds to be fully vaccinated. These low vaccination rates reveal countless missed opportunities to prevent HPV associated cancers and diseases. In response to this issue and knowing that HPV is the most common STD in the United States various partners have come together to make a change.

Meet Immunize Nevada, a diverse coalition of individual, business and organization partners committed to improving and protecting the health of children, teens, adults, and seniors in Nevada. Immunize Nevada received a Centers for Disease Control (CDC) grant labeled Closing the Human Papillomavirus (HPV) Vaccine Coverage Gap in 2014. High Sierra AHEC was invited to join them in December 2014 in their efforts to create an active and effective HPV taskforce to address the low vaccination rates in our community.

Other key stakeholders include the Nevada Cancer Coalition, and the Nevada Division of Public & Behavioral Health. High Sierra AHEC representatives have served on this taskforce for two years. This collaboration has led to innovative programming focused on improving the state’s immunization rates of 11- and-12 year-old males and females, providing education and outreach services to local health care providers, improving clinician training and understanding of the vaccine, and emphasizing the prevention of HPV related cancers.

Data support that the effectiveness of a strong recommendation by a health care provider is the single best predictor of whether a parent will decide to vaccinate their child. Knowing that a single recommendation has huge positive outcomes, Immunize Nevada created the HPV FREE NV campaign and the 2015 HPV Provider Summit. The HPV FREE NV campaign is a comprehensive statewide communication campaign targeted to parents of adolescents aged 11-18 living in zip codes that reflect low uptake of the HPV vaccine as indicated by Nevada’s Immunization Information System (IIS). The campaign promotes and links target populations to the Vaccines for Children (VFC) Program, a federally funded program that provides vaccines at no cost to children who might not otherwise be vaccinated because of inability to pay.

The first phase of this campaign was the development and dissemination of a provider toolkit titled “You are the Key to an HPV FREE NV”. This toolkit provides important resources to those who vaccinate in a multitude of settings, including private practices, local health departments, schools and community health clinics. The toolkit is intended to influence health care providers to make a strong recommendation for the HPV vaccine.
HPV vaccine and to assist parents of young patients in vaccine acceptance. It includes materials to help them and their staff communicate with patients about the importance of receiving the HPV vaccine. Guidelines provided for talking with parents about HPV include:

- Tips and Key Messages for HPV Immunization Success
- Tips and Time-savers for Talking with Parents About HPV
- American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) HPV Resource Sheet
- Why Your Doctor Says You Should Get All 3 HPV Vaccine Shots
- Immunization Action Coalition Parent’s Guide (English and Spanish)

High Sierra AHEC provided assistance to Immunize Nevada to distribute the toolkit statewide to hundreds of Vaccine for Children (VFC) providers. Each recipient was educated on the importance of making a strong and timely HPV vaccination recommendation, focusing on cancer prevention. Each provider was also encouraged to partner with practice managers to implement standards of practice to check the vaccination status of each teen patient and offer all indicated vaccines at every visit, schedule the next HPV vaccination dose appointment before the family leaves the office, utilize reminder/recall strategies to ensure teens return for remaining doses, and to partner with local stakeholders to implement these and other strategies to minimize missed HPV vaccination opportunities.

The impressive response to this toolkit led Immunize Nevada and High Sierra AHEC to offer an educational series to keep the conversation going. Immunize Nevada and High Sierra AHEC were awarded another CDC grant through NAO to do this. This support allowed for further collaboration and resulted in the development and implementation of our second phase, a statewide HPV Provider Summit, held on September 11, 2015. Through an interactive webinar platform, ReadyTalk, and the use of interactive video, in collaboration with the University of Nevada School of Medicine, the summit reached the entire state of Nevada. This technology served as a bridge with three site locations in Reno, Elko and Las Vegas. Each site location had a guest speaker and the agenda included the following sessions:

- Thinking Upstream: The HPV Vaccine is Cancer Prevention
- Making Nevada HPV FREE: The HPV Vaccine and Best Practices
- A Call to Action from a HPV-Associated Cancer Survivor
- The HPV Vaccine and Provider/Parent Communication
- The Changing Incidences of HPV-Associated Cancers
- HPV and Its Impact on Families

The summit was planned and implemented in accordance with the Essential Areas and Policies of the Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education through the joint providership of the University of Nevada School of Medicine and Immunize Nevada. This program was also approved for 5 hours of continuing education for nursing and pharmacy. About 75 attendees from across the state attended the webinar. The format proved to be a successful delivery method of high quality training reaching rural and medically underserved areas of northwestern Nevada.

Summit evaluations support that the various sessions raised awareness regarding the importance of effective communication with patients, implementation of best practices and overall knowledge about the severity of HPV and associated cancers.

Through this collaboration created by High Sierra AHEC and Immunize Nevada other resources and educational opportunities for health care professionals. Our intention is to educate and advocate. It is through these innovative strategies that we aim for improved HPV vaccination rates, improved access and quality of health care for patients, and stronger methods that will support adherence to the three-dose series. The end result is improved protection and prevention of HPV associated cancers and disease.

Additional programs in partnership with Immunize Nevada have begun and include a custom four-part webinar series focusing on non-VFC programs. Our intention is to raise HPV prevention and awareness to oral health care providers, pharmacists, parents of young patients and the LGBTQ population. We will collaborate with the Intermountain West Immunization Coalition and all webinars will be disseminated through the Nevada Immunization Learning Exchange (NILE). We will also educate future health care professionals by conducting various classroom based “You are the Key” presentations, specifically targeting the Division of Health Sciences and the University of Nevada, School of Medicine.

Together with old and new partners Immunize Nevada will continue to raise awareness through education and outreach services, and by conducting community needs assessments, and will encourage policies that further the acceptance of and adherence to the HPV vaccine for it has the power to prevent cancer.
According to the Centers for Disease Control, every year approximately 17,600 women and 9,300 men are affected by cancers caused by Human Papillomavirus (HPV). These cases can be reduced through immunization. The HPV vaccination can prevent many types of cancers. However, in Texas, 43.8 percent of girls are unvaccinated against HPV, 13-17 years (2013 NIS) and 65.9 percent of boys are unvaccinated against HPV, 13-17 years (2013 NIS).

Education is Key

The key to helping increase HPV immunization rates is to inform and educate the communities. In an effort to help educate health care providers about the importance of the vaccine and ensure that information is delivered to parents of youth between 13-17 years of age during their doctor’s visit, the Texas AHEC East Piney Woods Region is a proud member of the NAO HPV project and is committed to educating communities throughout the Texas.

Since the summer of 2015, Texas AHEC East Piney Woods Region has offered several continuing education programs in various cities throughout the Lone Star State. Their goal is to empower health care providers with factual information to facilitate the promotion of the HPV vaccine to prevent various types of cancers. Activities via webinar and live presentations have been well received in the various communities and the response from those attending the events has been extremely positive.

This is an example of the NAO-produced state profile sheets made available for all 50 states.
Binational Regional Health Conference

A reminder from the Centers for Disease Control Foundation emphasizes that illnesses and health issues have no boundaries. The goal to better serve communities along the United States/Mexico border encourages health care providers to participate in the annual U.S./Mexico Regional Binational Health Conference. This year marked the fourth annual conference and was focused on providing current information to practicing providers regarding diseases, emergencies and prevention methods being recommended to monitor, diagnose, treat and prevent health concerns throughout the communities served in the region.

On June 10, 2016, 165 participants from several health agencies and providers from the United States and Mexico participated in a binational conference to learn about health issues facing border communities including the importance of the HPV vaccine and its positive effects on youth who are vaccinated at 13 – 17 years of age.

The highlight of this year’s program included a presentation on “You are the Key: Human Papilloma Virus Cancer Prevention”. Medical professionals from Webb County, the City of Laredo and Nuevo Laredo, Mexico gathered at the University of Texas Health Science Center in Laredo, Texas.

The goal of this binational regional conference was to provide information that is current and relevant to the United States-Mexico border communities in regards to public health care issues including Ebola, Zika, mosquito borne diseases, tuberculosis, nutrition, HPV cancer prevention and other public health concerns. Participants were able to qualify for continuing education for their respective professional license requirements. This conference was made possible through the efforts of the Mid Rio Grande Border AHEC, Texas AHEC East Piney Woods Region, the United States-Mexico Border Health Commission, Texas Department of State Health Services, Office of Border Health, The Secretaría de Salud de Tamaulipas and the City of Laredo Health Department and the Area Health Education Center are collaborated in this effort to offer information on emerging issues that impact the entire community.

Tri-Counties Medical Conference

One of several continuing education activities was the live presentation offered on October 24, 2015 to health care providers from Webb, Zapata, and Jim Hogg counties during the 31st Annual Update in Medicine Conference held in Laredo, Texas.

The program was attended by physicians, nurses, social workers and allied health professionals. Continuing education hours were made available for physicians, nurses and social workers. Faculty members Ms. Laura Logan, MSN, RN, CCRN and Veronica Sjolander, MSN, RN, SANE-A from Stephen F. Austin State University co-presented the “You are the Key: HPV Cancer Prevention” presentation.

A total of 135 conference participants from Webb, Zapata, and Jim Hogg counties attended the live presentation. Participant evaluations revealed that the information presented to the audience was very well received. The majority of those present expressed an improved knowledge about HPV immunization and its positive impact on the health of men and women.

The presentation also sparked further discussion amongst the providers and some asked for a follow up presentation with more time for questions and answers.
Texas AHEC East Piney Woods Region acknowledges the importance of issues related to the low HPV immunization rates and has committed to being the lead agency for educating communities in Texas. Their efforts have resulted in the successful creation of partnerships with AHEC centers across the state, health care sites, clinics and community organizations to help disseminate the HPV immunization information. In addition, their utilization of social media promotes their website as an HPV immunization portal to share current information and links to various HPV immunization resources. Texas AHEC East Piney Woods Region is providing the foundation for improved education on the HPV vaccine in the communities.

Webinars

In its effort to continue to emphasize the importance of the HPV vaccine and increase HPV immunization rates, Texas AHEC East-Piney Woods Region is determined to inform and educate the communities throughout the State of Texas. Upcoming events and activities are the result of newly established partnerships which will benefit more than 111 counties in the Texas AHEC East Region. Current plans include hosting a webinar in each of the 111 counties in the East Texas region – “You are the Key: HPV Prevention” and dissemination of educational materials in English and Spanish to educate providers, family members and the community at large about the importance of the HPV vaccine.

Education Credits

Texas AHEC East-Piney Woods Region has successfully secured continuing education hours for participants that choose either live presentations and/or webinars.

References:
Texas Demographic Center, http://osd.texas.gov/
Medically Underserved Areas/Populations - HRSA, www.hrsa.gov/shortage/mua/
Centers for Disease Control Foundation, http://www.cdcfoundation.org/blog-entry/ebola-us-reminder-disease-knows-no-boundaries
Texas AHEC East
The George Washington University GW Cancer Institute
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

![HPV Cancer Prevention](image-url)
Overcoming Challenges Through Regional Collaboration Results in Innovative Partnerships

The National AHEC Organization HPV Immunization Project funded by the Center for Disease Control (CDC) takes a 50-state approach by dividing the nation into 10 specific regions with Regional Coordinators overseeing each of the regions and establishing State Entities in each of the states to provide HPV education to healthcare professionals.

Region J, which comprises the states of Alaska, Washington, Oregon and Idaho, dived into Year 1 of the NAO HPV Immunization Project with many expectations, including the expectation of establishing State Entities in each of the four states. It was quickly discovered this would not be as easily established as initially planned and, as Year 1 came to a close, it was apparent that a new approach in Year 2 was not only needed, but necessary, in order to successfully engage the entire region in the NAO HPV Immunization Project.

It is not uncommon for regional projects to present their own host of unique challenges, but in order to be successful each of these challenges need to be addressed and resolved in ways that lead to positive outcomes. This was such the case for Region J going into Year 2 of the NAO HPV Immunization Project. AHECs in general are well-versed in “thinking outside the box” especially faced with new projects and unanticipated challenges. This not only encourages
innovation but results in pursuing new approaches and the development of opportunities to overcome challenges and bring success to the program.

A project activity in Year 1 that helped set the foundation to seek out new approaches was an Environmental Scan project. This project identified various organizations, contact information and HPV immunization programs in each of the states. Outreach was conducted to gather more specific project information and contact was made with several of the key players in HPV initiative activities. Though HPV immunization work was being done in each of the four states, it was apparent there was a need for HPV immunization healthcare provider education which the NAO HPV Immunization Project had the opportunity to fill.

Although the CDC has a robust HPV immunization healthcare provider education available through “You are the Key to HPV Cancer Prevention” training materials it takes a strong, organized network to systematically provide this training and specialize it to fit the needs of each state, as well provide a variety of methods to access the training.

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The goals and objectives of the NAO HPV Immunization Project are focused on creating such a network to meet these needs.

A strong provider recommendation is the most effective way to encourage the HPV vaccination and reduce the rate of missed opportunities for vaccination and, ultimately, increase HPV Immunization rates. This should, in turn, result in a reduction in HPV related cancers. HPV immunization is cancer prevention. Provider education focuses on the priority of not only recommending the HPV vaccination series, but making it a normal part of an adolescent’s normal vaccination schedule.

The HPV vaccination rates in 2013 in Alaska were 27.1 percent for girls and 8.5 percent for boys. In Washington they were 45.3 percent for girls and 12.5 percent for boys. In Oregon the rates were 39.5 percent for girls and 12.5 percent for boys, and in Idaho it was 31.3 percent for girls. No rates were available for boys. 1

In the Alaska, the provider recommendation rate for girls is 67.9 percent and 35.6 percent for boys. In Washington it is 78.1 percent for girls and 42.4 percent for boys. In Oregon it is 75.3 percent for girls and 42.4 percent for boys, and the Idaho provider recommendation rates is 67.5 percent for girls and 43.1 percent for boys. 2

Though HPV immunization provider education has been occurring, much can be improved upon. Each state in our region has its own unique challenges to address, and it is important to understand the current activities, how to access the health care providers in various systems, and even the political and social climate around immunizations. The sheer physical landmass of each state, along with their numerous rural and frontier health care providers, is a challenge that also needs to be taken into account when structuring educational opportunities.

The Alaska AHEC successfully addressed this obstacle and conducted a live webinar training program, collaborating with the State of Alaska Immunization Program and HPV expert Joanie Hope, M.D., a Board Certified Gynecologic Oncologist, who is the founder and managing partner at the Alaska Women’s Cancer Care, and the Director of Gynecologic Oncology at both Providence Alaska Medical Center and the Alaska Native Medical Center. The webinar was recorded and made available online through the Alaska Cache training system (www.akcache.org) and on the State of Alaska Immunization Program website. Both the live and recorded opportunities had continuing education credits available. Sixty-seven providers attended the live training with several more utilizing the recorded version. Upon the success of this training opportunity it became apparent that engagement in the rest of the region would the top priority in Year 2 of the grant

Several of the organizations identified in the environmental scan as already doing some sort of HPV immunization work within the Region J states, kept referring to the American Cancer Society (ACS). State health departments, non-profit organizations and immunizations groups all had some sort of tie or connection to the ACS either through their staff, special projects or resources.
Based on this information, the ACS was approached as a potential partner on the NAO HPV Immunization Project in each of the Region J states. The ACS response was overwhelmingly positive and enthusiastic. What developed from these first contacts are not only individual state partnerships, but an entire regional approach with the Alaska AHEC State Entity having the role as the regional State Entity and the American Cancer Society as the regional “boots on the ground” in each of the states. A Regional Partnership work plan was developed early on in the partnership, with all involved giving feedback on roles and expectations as part of the process to clearly communicate the expectations of all involved in the project. The ACS and the NAO HPV Immunization Project Partnership will focus on not only supporting and strengthening the already occurring activities, but will specifically concentrate on filling the identified gaps in provider training. This partnership will create a network of provider education, resources and project awareness on the HPV Immunization efforts across the whole region.

This is a very exciting partnership not only for the success of increasing HPV immunization provider education but in the connection of two national networks often working on similar initiatives. The ACS brings a national network of resources, subject experts and advocates, and staff dedicated to cancer prevention activities and projects.

The NAO HPV Immunization Project brings access to the AHEC national network, knowhow in healthcare provider training, and continuing education expertise. An exciting unintended consequence resulting from this regional partnership has been the introduction of AHEC to the American Cancer Society. Before this projects the ACS within the region was not aware of what AHECs did or even who they were. Shared education on both national programs has occurred along with potential opportunities for future collaborations on local, regional and national levels.

The partnership is already resulting in future training opportunities in the entire region. The ACS has secured well known speakers in the area of HPV immunization. Two live trainings in Washington and Oregon and three webinar trainings for the entire region are confirmed for July through August 2016. An additional training focused on HPV and head and neck cancers is in development. There will be strategic placement of the live trainings to allow the opportunity for rural health care providers in multiple states to attend.

The Alaska AHEC State Entity and the American Cancer Society are looking forward to achieving the overall goal of educating health care providers on the HPV immunization recommendations and making a positive impact on the HPV Immunization goals of each state.
NAO HPV Resources
nationalahec.org/hpv
• Webinars
• Success Stories
• Project Resources

CDC HPV Resources
cdc.gov/hpv
• For Parents and Public
• For Healthcare Professionals
• For Partners and Programs

Free CE Opportunity!
Continuing education training titled “You are the Key to HPV Cancer Prevention Continuing Education Training Self-Study Guide” is being offered by the National AHEC Organization and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
This self-study guide was designed to meet the educational needs of health professionals who provide and/or promote immunizations including physicians, registered nurses, and pharmacists.
Access the training at:
cmeuniversity.com/course/disclaimer/111996

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The National AHEC Organization Mission
The National AHEC Organization represents a network of more than 300 AHEC program offices and centers that serve over 85% of United States counties. The NAO mission is to help its members achieve the AHEC mission through advocacy, education, and research.

The AHEC Mission
The AHEC mission is to enhance access to quality health care, particularly primary and preventive care, by improving the supply and distribution of healthcare professionals via strategic partnerships with academic programs, communities, and professional organizations.