



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**December 23, 2010**

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## **January is National Cervical Health Awareness Month *California Medical Association Foundation Promotes Prevention***

**Sacramento-** California Medical Association (CMA) Foundation joins forces with other health advocates across the nation to promote "Cervical Health Awareness Month."

Cervical cancer is the second most common form of cancer worldwide and causes 250,000 deaths a year; 4,000 of those in the United States. Each year, nearly 1,400 California women are diagnosed with cervical cancer and 400 die from the disease.

Cervical cancer is one of the few preventable cancers that can easily be detected through an inexpensive screening and also prevented through a vaccine.

Most cases of cervical cancer are caused by the Human Papillomavirus, or HPV. Millions of American women are infected with HPV, but due to its often symptomless nature, a woman can be unaware of her risk of developing cervical cancer.

"By proclaiming January as "Cervical Health Awareness Month," this is the perfect opportunity to remind women to schedule their annual screening and also schedule appointments for their children to receive the series of HPV vaccine shots,"states CMA Foundation board member, Diana Ramos, MD, MPH.

While cervical cancer affects all races, Latina and African American women have the highest death rates.

In California, Latinas are diagnosed with cervical cancer twice as often as Caucasian women. Research shows that 10 percent of Latinas in California have never had a Pap test, and 30 percent have not had a test in three years.

Mortality from cervical cancer is associated with later stage of diagnosis, and thus poorer access to preventive services, including infrequent or no pap screening and lack of follow-up.

At a recent Cervical Cancer and HPV Vaccine Summit, the CMA Foundation launched the California phase of a nationwide *Cervical Cancer-Free* campaign. The Campaign aims to

reduce the prevalence of cervical cancer through increased screening and vaccination. California's campaign will focus on Latinas and other groups at greatest risk, those with continued high rates of cancer and low rates of screening and prevention. A comprehensive array of resources for physicians, other healthcare providers and consumers, including online clinical education resources and multilingual patient education materials has been developed and are available on the project's website, [www.thecmafoundation.org/projects/hpv](http://www.thecmafoundation.org/projects/hpv).

"Cervical cancer is a preventable disease. No woman should ever die from cervical cancer with the preventive services so widely available at no or low-cost,"states Carol Lee, Esq., president and CEO of the CMA Foundation.

To see if you qualify for free breast and cervical cancer screening, call "Every Woman Counts" at 1-800-511-2300 Monday - Friday from 8:30 AM to 5 PM. Operators speak English, Spanish, Mandarin, Cantonese, Korean, and Vietnamese. If you qualify, you will be referred to participating doctors in your neighborhood.

To see if your child qualifies for a free HPV Vaccine, ask their doctor if they offer "Vaccines for Children" (VFC) shots. Children eligible for California's Child Health and Disability Prevention (CHDP) program may also be eligible for free or low-cost shots.

Startup funding for the California Cervical Cancer Free Campaign is made possible by a grant from GlaxoSmithKline. For more information about the campaign, please contact Sara Cook, Cervical Cancer and HPV Project Director, CMA Foundation, at [scook@thecmafoundation.org](mailto:scook@thecmafoundation.org) or visit [www.thecmafoundation.org](http://www.thecmafoundation.org).

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#### **About the California Medical Association (CMA) Foundation**

*The CMA Foundation is a nonprofit organization that serves as a link between physicians and their communities. The Foundation improves individual and community health through a partnership of leaders in medicine, related health professions and the community. In 2006, the Foundation developed its [Cervical Cancer & HPV Project](#), [Screen Yourself & Vaccinate your Daughter](#) with the goal of educating both patients and clinicians about the connection between the HPV virus and cervical cancer. An HPV Vaccine Summit held by the Foundation in 2008 focused on reducing disparities in vaccine usage as well as identifying action steps to reduce barriers impacting the rate of HPV vaccination in California.*

#### **About GlaxoSmithKline**

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