**Sample op-ed: fund and support HPV vaccination as an effective tool in preventing cervical cancer among women in India**

*How to use this template*  
This document provides a pre-written opinion piece that physician advocates can tailor with relevant statistics, anecdotes, or regional or local contexts to be sent to communication outlets like blogs, newsletters, and journals that have a primarily physician audience. The purpose of this opinion piece is to raise awareness of and spark dialogue around HPV vaccination as a cervical cancer prevention tool within the context of the implementation of the World Health Organization’s (WHO) global strategy.

When preparing to submit this op-ed, make a list of the publications or blogs that have an audience of physicians you are trying to reach and prioritize the list. Starting with the publication or blog at the top of your priority list, reach out to gauge interest. Share a short summary of the op-ed, rather than the full piece, to gauge interest in the topic.

If the publication confirms interest, be sure to review all outlet editorial guidelines (e.g., word count and formatting) before submitting the piece for review. Also, **be certain to delete this instruction section before submitting.** If the publication or blog declines to publish your op-ed, consider feedback provided and move to the next outlet on your priority outreach list.

**Uniting to Prevent Cervical Cancer in India: An Opportunity We Cannot Afford to Ignore**

As the fourth most common cancer among women worldwide, cervical cancer claims the life of one woman every two minutes, or more than 300,000 women every year [1], the large majority of whom are in low- and middle-income countries [1,2].

In India alone, one woman dies of cervical cancer every eight minutes [3]. In 2020, 123,907 Indian women were diagnosed with cervical cancer and 77,348 women lost their lives due to it [4]. Gravely, India contributes to nearly one-fifth of the global burden of cervical cancer [5].

All this despite the fact that cervical cancer is preventable. The World Health Organization’s recently adopted *Global Strategy towards the Elimination of Cervical Cancer as a Public Health Problem* seeks to end cervical cancer within the lifetime of today’s youngest girls [6]. A key component of the strategy is increasing human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccination rates to 90%, along with cervical screening and treatment of cancer.

HPV vaccination is one of the most cost-effective prevention tools, protecting against at least 70% of all cervical cancers [1]. Research has shown that the HPV vaccine is safe and effective. Yet, globally, only 15% of age-eligible girls are fully vaccinated against HPV [7]. HPV vaccine has been available in India since 2008 and can help prevent cervical cancer in more than 100,000 Indian women every year [8]. Research shows that if all Indian girls were vaccinated, it could translate into saving nearly 50,000 lives per year [9]. With the recent decision to add the HPV vaccine to India’s Universal Immunization Programme, there is no better time to focus on protecting girls from cervical cancer through this life-saving vaccine.

This is the first time in history that we have the tools and knowledge to achieve the elimination of a cancer. We cannot afford to lose this moment. We need to be a part of the solution in creating a generation of Indian women free from the pain and suffering caused by cervical cancer.

We can play a key role in eliminating this life-threatening disease so that our wives, sisters, mothers, friends, and daughters can thrive. Actions we can take now include:

* Share educational messages in the community to increase awareness about cervical cancer, demystify, and destigmatize the disease.
* Champion cross-sectoral collaborations to increase HPV vaccination uptake. For example, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and state departments of health and family welfare could work with state departments of education to expand programming such as school-based HPV vaccination programmes.
* Communicate to your peers, parents of adolescent girls, and communities that the HPV vaccine will be available for free through the Universal Immunization Programme (once it is rolled out in your state).

We must now echo the global commitment to eliminate cervical cancer with local action. Success will require partnership like never before and we look forward to partnering with you to achieve our ambition of a world free from cervical cancer, starting here in India, and in your state.

**References**

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