

To assess the Knowledge, awareness and attitudes regarding HPV vaccination among college-aged women in Maun, Botswana

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Objective: The objective of this study was to assess the knowledge, awareness and attitudes of human papillomavirus (HPV), HPV vaccine and cervical cancer among university and college young women in Maun, Botswana.

Methods/Materials: The study was a cross-sectional survey that was conducted in four tertiary institutions in Maun which comprises of two universities and two colleges. A structured questionnaire with approximately 40 questions was distributed to female students from selected tertiary institutions. The target population was female students aged 18 to 26 years attending university/college.

Results: The average age of respondents was 23 years (range 18-26 years). About fifty-four percent of the respondents had heard about HPV, 40.3% did not hear about HPV and 6% were not sure if they had heard about HPV. Approximately 14% the respondents had heard about the HPV vaccine, 81.1% did not hear about the HPV vaccine and 5.4% were not sure if they had heard about the vaccine. Only 13.3%

of the respondents were aware that the HPV vaccine is available in Botswana and 86.7% were not aware. Most respondents (61.5%) were able to identify the association between cervical cancer and HPV. Only 39.6% correctly identified genital skin-to-skin contact as the mode of HPV transmission. Only 30% of the respondents were aware that HPV affects both men and women, 70% thought that it only affects women. The level of knowledge on HPV prevention was low with 32.9% suggesting that it can be prevented by abstinence, 38.5% suggesting condoms, and 29.4% suggesting vaccination. Sexual activity (OR 0.53, 95% CI 0.31-0.89, $p=0.017$), was statistically significantly associated with the knowledge of causal relationship between HPV and cervical cancer.

Conclusion. Most respondents demonstrated adequate knowledge on the causative link between HPV and cervical cancer but the knowledge, awareness and attitudes regarding the transmission of HPV were considerably lower.