The purpose of this study was to assess college students’ perceptions and knowledge about the Human Papilloma Virus (HPV). The study measured students’ perceived knowledge and attitudes toward the HPV vaccine.

Method

A 4-page, close-ended survey was used to explore students’ perceived knowledge about HPV after IRB approval. Surveys were handed to students in high traffic areas to complete and return to a research team. The research team visited the classrooms of faculty who had agreed to the request to collect data. Aggregate data were reported with no identifiers. Frequencies, means and standard deviations were used to describe the responses.

Results

A total of 705 participants completed the survey. 184 (26.6%) identified as male, 507 (73.1%) identified as female, two (0.3%) respondents identified as transgender. Majority of the respondents were 20 years old or younger (44.4%), 42.3% were between 21 and 25 years old, 6.7% and 6.6% were between 26 and 30 years old and older than 31 years old. Only about 20% of respondents indicated they have some knowledge about HPV. Majority of respondents (482; 69.4%) did not believe they were too young to be infected by the virus. 56.3% (319) of respondents indicated that females had a higher risk for HPV compared to males (232; 40.9%). Students had high confidence about discussing HPV with other people and the confidence about the safety of the vaccine. Identified groups include: family members (85%); sexual partners (89%); roommates or friends (89%); and health care providers (97%). 85% of students were confident that the vaccine was safe; 90% were confident that getting the vaccine would reduce their chances of getting cancer.

Discussion/Conclusion

While just about one-fifth of respondents have some knowledge about HPV, majority believed they were at risk for the infection even with their young age. Young people across America are not aware of the severity of HPV due to the lack of education. It is imperative for family, primary care physicians and health education courses to educate college students on HPV. Young people across America are not aware of the severity of HPV due to lack of awareness. HPV vaccinations should be encouraged during the early years to help protect lives.

Background

The Human Papilloma Virus infection (HPV) is sexually transmitted and a public health issue in the United States (CDC, 2019; Grace-Leitch et al.). This disease cause several different types of cancer such as cervical, vaginal, and oropharyngeal, and genital warts.

HPV is a leading cause of cervical cancer in women with about 91% of cases caused by HPV (CDC, 2019). Some college students have not heard of the infection or been vaccinated. Many do not believe that HPV is serious and that obtaining the vaccine is necessary. Vaccinations are highly recommended to help reduce spread of the infection.

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