

FIGO Congress News: FIGO Launches Global Effort To Stop Cervical Cancer

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New Guidance And Partnerships Announced; Clinicians Called To Support The Effort

The International Federation of Gynecology and Obstetrics (FIGO) launched a major component in the fight to control cervical cancer on 8 October 2009, releasing its [global guidance document](#) and announcing a unique partnership with the International Pediatric Association (IPA) to fight the disease.

The announcement was made at the FIGO World Congress of Gynecology and Obstetrics, being held at the Cape Town International Convention Centre from 4 to 9 October.

After decades of committed research, new technologies and breakthroughs in knowledge make cervical cancer preventable for all women around the globe. The ability to eliminate the number one cancer killer of women in the developing world is now in the hands of health professionals and governments.

Professor Harald zur Hausen, awarded the 2008 Nobel Prize in Medicine for discovering the link between the human papillomavirus and cervical cancer, was in Cape Town to lend his support to the initiatives of FIGO and IPA.

“The impact of HPV vaccines and novel approaches to early screening and treatment will only be fully realised when these tools are widely available to girls and women in developing countries,” he said.

Cervical cancer hits more than 500,000 women per year, killing more than 270,000 around the globe. Tragically, over 80 percent of these deaths occur in developing countries, where often no solutions were available.

“Science has done its part, now we must all work together to ensure that physicians are given the tools and support to put this knowledge to work, saving lives,” said Zur Hausen.

Building on its commitment to improving women’s health around the world, FIGO has launched its new Global Guidance for Cervical Cancer Prevention and Control, providing the most up to date evidence for options to control this disease and urging its membership to take a comprehensive approach, utilizing the latest tools and cost-effective approaches.

“FIGO has, and will, continue to expand its efforts to match the opportunities now at hand,” said Dr Dorothy Shaw MD, FIGO’s President, who will be completing her term during this week’s Congress. “This new guidance, which is intended to complement work done by WHO and other organisations, was an important effort for FIGO to take. We wanted our member societies to have the best information about what FIGO thinks can be accomplished and how,” she said.

A Call to Action

For FIGO, this new guidance is a springboard to action, calling on its membership to take a rights-based perspective and engage as physicians and as advocates to end this unnecessary disease.

“As physicians we must take responsibility for the human rights denied to women with cervical cancer diagnoses – and the right of all women to the highest attainable standard of health care and life. Controlling cancer not only prevents death and disability but also will create improvement in the health and well-being of families,” said Professor Joanna Cain MD, who spearheaded the effort to develop the guidance. “Only by taking a comprehensive approach that provides equitable access to vaccination, appropriate screening and effective treatment tailored to the needs of each region, country or culture, will there be progress in controlling cervical cancer.”

New Opportunities, Fresh Approaches

A key element of FIGO’s comprehensive approach to cervical cancer is ensuring the availability, affordability and accessibility of HPV vaccines. Encouraged by the World Health Organisation’s endorsement of HPV vaccination and the GAVI Alliance’s commitment to making the vaccine available in as many developing countries as possible, FIGO and the International Pediatric Association announced a unique collaboration to educate, mobilise and unify their members who serve at the frontlines of this disease.

FIGO and IPA will create a unique partnership to increase informed uptake of the vaccine and improve prevention efforts for women by targeting girls, parents, and clinicians, particularly in developing countries where the disease is most severe.

“Cervical cancer can be made largely preventable by immunizing adolescents, and by effectively screening women and ensuring that the necessary treatment is available to women who need it,” said Chok-wan Chan MD, President of IPA. “With all these moving parts, collaboration between gynecologists, pediatricians, nurses and midwives from the community to the national level is essential. We know that vaccines for girls and early prevention for women will save lives. We need to work together to make this happen—all of us.”

Next Steps

FIGO plans to use the new guidance and partnership as tools to activate the tens of thousands of members from its 113 member associations.

“We believe the guidance provides important information about what works and how in every setting,” said Professor Cain. “It took many people a long time to figure this out. Now it’s our turn. We owe it to the women in our care.”