

# GIAHC: Global Initiative Against HPV and Cervical Cancer



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**The Global Initiative Against HPV and Cervical Cancer (GIAHC) is an organization working toward raising human papillomavirus (HPV) awareness and eliminating cervical cancer through education and empowerment of international stakeholders.**

The Global Initiative Against HPV and Cervical Cancer (GIAHC) is an organization working toward raising human papillomavirus (HPV) awareness and eliminating cervical cancer through education and empowerment of international stakeholders. Since our founding in 2010, we have been vocal advocates for vaccination against HPV, screening, and expanded access to early treatment. We recognize that cervical cancer is a preventable public health problem and are proud to continue the fight to make this a disease of the past.

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Figure 1

Founded in 2010, the Global Initiative Against HPV and Cervical Cancer (GIAHC) works toward raising human papillomavirus (HPV) awareness and eliminating cervical cancer through education and empowerment of international stakeholders. GIAHC is a vocal advocate for vaccination against HPV, screening, and expanded access to early treatment, with the aim of making cervical cancer a disease of the past.

The infographic is divided into three main sections. On the left, a teal box contains the text 'Our Mission: Saving lives from cervical cancer, one woman at a time, one day at a time.' In the center, there is a graphic of several hands of different skin tones reaching towards a central blue and white globe, with the text 'Global Initiative Against HPV and Cervical Cancer' below it. On the right, another teal box contains the text 'Our Vision: Ending HPV-related cancers, starting with cervical cancer.' Below these three sections is a larger light blue box containing the text 'Our Core Values: No woman deserves to die of cervical cancer. Cervical cancer is a preventable public health problem that we can end through vaccination, screening and early treatment.'

Cervical cancer is nearly 100% preventable, but a woman dies of this cancer every two minutes. Persistent infection with high-risk strains of HPV cause greater than 99% of cervical cancer cases worldwide.<sup>1,2</sup> Routine screening and administration of the HPV vaccine in recommended age groups have decreased cervical cancer incidence.<sup>3</sup>

**Racial and ethnic minorities, socioeconomically disadvantaged, and those in rural areas have significantly lower rates of vaccination, screening, and treatment of cervical cancer, leading to worse outcomes. In addition, there is continued dissemination of inaccurate or misleading information on social media channels regarding evidence-based practices including HPV vaccination and cervical cancer screening**

Unfortunately, there are ongoing disparities in cervical cancer prevention, screening, and

treatment. Racial and ethnic minorities, socioeconomically disadvantaged, and those in rural areas have significantly lower rates of vaccination, screening, and treatment of cervical cancer, leading to worse outcomes.<sup>4</sup> In addition, there is continued dissemination of inaccurate or misleading information on social media channels regarding evidence-based practices including HPV vaccination and cervical cancer screening. Healthcare professionals and organizations should be aware that patients' concerns about HPV vaccination and cervical cancer screening may be amplified by such posts.<sup>5</sup>

Our Young Leaders division, composed of individuals  $\leq 40$  years old, is focused on tackling these disparities through advocacy and awareness work, social media campaigns, fundraising efforts, outreach events, our annual **Us vs HPV Week** webinars, and partnerships with organizations with aligned missions and goals. In this spirit, we have partnered with the American Medical Women's Association (AMWA) for the past five-years to host **Us vs HPV week**: a one-week webinar series to promote awareness about HPV and HPV-related cancers. In 2023, over 500 registrants attended the webinars, which focused on the importance of addressing disparities in cervical

cancer, innovations in global prevention, and new information on HPV-related anal, head, and neck cancers, among other topics. We are honored to provide a platform to international leaders of varied backgrounds, including physicians, politicians, public health researchers, and patient advocates, among others.

Most recently, we launched our GIAHC Young Leaders (GYL) grant, an idea born from the personal experiences of our Young Leaders, who are predominantly pre-medical or medical students. Many of us related to the fact that young professionals in the academic space often encounter difficulty securing funding for research and community outreach early in one's career. The GYL grant supports students, researchers, advocates, and community activists interested in forwarding GIAHC's mission. Our

inaugural grantee is currently researching an intervention to address reduced rates of HPV vaccination among populations of color and variable socioeconomic status in a rural United States community.

Our team is also active in fundraising and outreach. In 2022, we co-hosted a fundraiser with HerHealthEQ to provide a colposcope to a community-based clinic in Costa Rica, a country with a high burden of cervical cancer. In addition, our outreach team continuously offers webinars and events in partnership with student organizations, medical schools, interest groups, and community organizations. We are currently studying the impact of these educational events on HPV and cervical cancer awareness, interest, and knowledge amongst undergraduate and graduate student attendees.

**GIAHC is looking forward to expanding efforts in four main areas: 1) addressing cervical cancer disparities, 2) fundraising for sustainable screening and treatment tools in low-middle income countries, 3) utilizing social media to promote HPV and cervical cancer awareness campaigns, and 4) hosting outreach events to inspire national and international students to join our effort.**

Based on our work to-date and developments in the field, our team is looking forward to expanding our efforts in four main areas:

- 1) addressing cervical cancer disparities,
- 2) fundraising for sustainable screening and treatment tools in low-middle income countries,
- 3) utilizing social media to promote HPV and cervical cancer awareness campaigns, and
- 4) hosting outreach events to inspire national and international students to join our effort.

Together, we can eliminate cervical cancer in this generation. ■

#### **DISCLOSURE**

The authors have no conflicts of interest to disclose.

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