

Scadding Court Community Centre

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**CHINESE CANADIAN NURSES
ASSOCIATION**

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For Immediate Release: Public dialogue on Ontario's Human Papillomavirus (HPV) immunization program must include right to informed choice for all, particularly those who face linguistic, cultural and other barriers to accessing information.

Toronto – Making informed decisions about health matters is everyone's right and responsibility. The recent and relatively sudden decision to offer an HPV vaccination program to Grade 8 girls creates challenges with respect to this principle of informed choice.

Accessing and understanding health information is particularly challenging for newcomers and others who face linguistic, cultural, literacy and other barriers. There are signs that these communities are among those most important to reach with this information. Lower birth rates among immigrant teens (as compared to mainstream teens) suggest that many could be reached before they engage in active sexual behaviour – a time when the vaccine is most effective.

Immigrants families may not have the luxury of time to think about it now. Many lack the money and/or workplace benefit coverage that would make vaccination at a later date possible. Refusing a vaccination at this point based on a lack of information or for any other reason could therefore result in not having access at all in the face of a \$400 fee for the vaccine.

Studies of immunization programs also indicate that the most effective public education process for adolescents is peer education, which means one adolescent talking to another. This kind of education takes time and will not be possible under the current vaccination program timelines.

As a Toronto District School Board Trustee and a Toronto Board of Health member, Soo Wong says "There is a pressing need for culturally and linguistically appropriate information on this issue for Toronto's ESL communities. For the vaccination program to be effective and inclusive, efforts must be made to provide all grade 8 girls and their families with meaningful, appropriate and timely health information with which they can make an important personal decision about their long term health."

On Tuesday September 11 at 3:30pm, Scadding Court Community Centre's Cross-Cultural Health Services Clinic and the Chinese Canadian Nurses Association (CCNA) will host a press conference at Scadding Court Community Centre, 707 Dundas Street West (intersection of Dundas and Bathurst Streets) to release a Chinese (simplified writings) community-based fact sheet on the HPV vaccine - based on a fact sheet by Toronto Public Health (TPH). Sample copies of translated information in 12 languages from TPH will also be available. Soo Wong, Dr. Tao Wang of St. Michael's Hospital and the Scadding Court Cross-Cultural Health Services Clinic and Sharon Truong of CCNA will present the issue and be available for discussion and comment.

For more information please contact:

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