

Drugs, Sex, Money and Power: an HPV case study



Marion Haas

**International Network Health Policy &
Reform**

Academy Health, Chicago, June 2009

International Network Health Policy & Reform

- Since 2002, the Bertelsmann Foundation has sponsored the International Network Health Policy and Reform
- 20 countries convene to report on & compare health policies

Marion Haas



Toni Ashton



Terkel Christiansen



Luca Crivelli



Elena Conis

Meng Kin Lim



Margaret McAdam



Melanie Lisac

Kerstin Blum



Sophia Schlette

The HPV case study

- In 2007 several countries reported on the introduction of the human papilloma virus (HPV) vaccine
- Almost simultaneous consideration & adoption is a unique opportunity to compare policy processes & outcomes
- Used case studies, articles from public agencies, professional journals and newspapers to:
 - Analyse public debate
 - Examine positions & influence of stakeholder groups
 - Processes and outcomes

HPV & development of a vaccine

- Cervical cancer is second most common cancer in women
 - >100 strains of HPV – 20 linked to cervical cancer
 - Majority of HPV infections transient & asymptomatic
- 1991- collaboration between University of Queensland (Australia) & US National Cancer Institute developed science behind the vaccine
 - Gardasil (Sanofi Pasteur & Merck)
 - Cervarix (GlaxoSmithKline)
- Both vaccines target HPV types 16 & 18
 - Together cause >70% of cervical cancers
- **Neither prevents 100% of cervical cancers**

Influences on public debate: manufacturers

- Normal practice to try to influence probability of product being recommended, adopted or subsidised
 - Lobbying, engaging media, identifying supporters

- Canada, Germany, USA, Merck perceived as “leading the push” for a subsidised program

- Denmark – both companies employed media in “scientific debate”

- Australia: company role not obvious – media concentrated on the 2006 Australian of the Year – Prof Ian Frazer

Influences on public debate: special interest groups

- Most medical & public health agencies supported subsidised program
 - Debate about mandatory scheme in the USA
 - Debate about long term safety

- Support from consumer & community groups variable
 - Debate about timing, long-term effects, costs for disadvantaged groups
 - Moral issues raised by social conservatives


- Fierce debate in Switzerland as vaccine was introduced

Issues raised by the policy

- Interpretation of scientific knowledge for purposes of policy
 - What is the relationship between many HPV strains & vaccine on morbidity & mortality?
- Effect on current prevention programs for cervical cancer
 - Regular Pap tests still needed
 - “double barreled” message less effective?
- Cost-effectiveness
 - More expensive than most vaccines
 - Rate of uptake not known
 - Open debate conspicuous by its absence

Decision making processes

- High levels of uncertainty

 **Opens the way for a “struggle” between competing interests**

- Sometimes prior to decision, sometimes after

- Different decision making processes &/or disparate influences of supporters & opponents

 **Most countries made similar decisions about value of a subsidised program**

- Number of countries departed from usual processes

- High level of urgency

- Initial decisions overturned

 **Political influence**

 **Credible “lead” countries**

Conclusions

- Speedy introduction of program represents a convergence of interests
 - Motivated by public health or profit

- Important lessons for advocates & lobbyists about how to win friends and influence people
 - Used values (caring, prevention)
 - Used fear (of cancer, promiscuity)
 - Effectively deployed the media

Conclusions (cont.)

- **Most important lesson for policy makers**
 - **Use transparent & robust guidelines**
 - **Keep them at arms-length from political process**
 - **Adhere firmly to agreed processes**

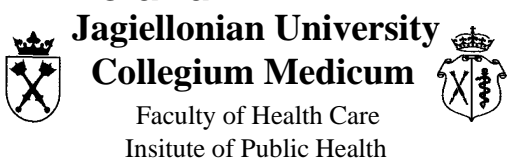
Thank you very much for your attention!

Thanks to all my colleagues in the Network

see all reports at www.hpm.org

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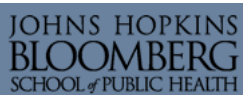
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