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What can NGOs do in communicating HPV prevention

**Amelie Mc Fadyen, MA**

Chief Executive Officer,
HPV Awareness
Corporation (NGO)
Montreal, Québec, Canada
ameliemcfadyen@hpvawareness.org

**Teresa Norris, MA**

Founder and President,
HPV Awareness Corporation (NGO)
Montreal, Québec, Canada
tnorris@hpvawareness.org

**Thérèse Lethu, PhD**

CEO, Global Health Objectives; Special
Advisor Women's Health in Africa,
Université Numérique
Francophone Mondiale
Geneva, Switzerland
tletbu@gmail.com

**Jennifer Smith, PhD, MPH**

Professor, Department of Epidemiology
University of North Carolina
Chapel Hill, North Carolina, US
Director, Cervical Cancer-Free Coalition
jssmith@email.unc.edu

Positive sexual health education outcomes are most likely to occur when communication integrates knowledge, motivation, and skill-building opportunities per the Information, Motivation, Behavioral Skills model (IMB)¹. It is important to begin a communication strategy by understanding the specific population's knowledge, attitudes and practices.

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NGOs share direct platforms with the general population, with the opportunity to educate on prevention of HPV and HPV-associated cancers. Given the large gap between the amount of knowledge gained from HPV-related research and the concrete application of results in community settings, NGOs need to dissect,

simplify and disseminate research messages that are most likely to have a positive impact in practice. Evidence-based research results can effectively be integrated as information for NGO educational programs.

Utilizing reliable messages and information sources when educating the general population about HPV prevention is critical given that people will research the topic on their own. The general population should be encouraged to be critical thinkers and to have curiosity to investigate further. First, it is crucial to know the difference between an expert on HPV and associated cancers from someone who has an opinion on the matter. When reading online information about HPV, look for the evidence behind the message. Start by scrolling to the bottom of the site to verify how recent the information is, as the most updated information is most accurate and preferable. Then, check how reliable the source

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is. What other information is coming from this source; is the content primarily facts or opinions; do they put references for any quotes or validated data? Next, check the authority of the source; What are their credentials, is their background relevant to the topic? Who is the publisher of the site, are they reputable? Finally, check the accuracy of the article. Is the information supported by scientific evidence; can you verify this information from another reliable source?

The role of NGOs in supporting the fight against cervical cancer and other HPV-associated cancers is crucial globally. NGOs are specialized in various fields, from prevention, to community mobilization, to lobbying policies, and serve as important allies of public health. Increasingly, NGOs are encouraged to network with other NGOs with similar missions, to optimize their

human and financial resources, and increase the visibility of their actions.

Prevention programs against HPV-associated cancer require a lot of political will and community mobilization. Still too often, funds and imagination are spent reinventing the wheel, while programs that have already proven their effectiveness remain underutilized. NGOs certainly benefit from new opportunities and innovative tools to more effectively manage their knowledge that will in turn fuel NGOs so that they will be financially sustainable. However, NGOs do need a framework to consider their actions through coordinated efforts and sharing of experiences, as well as appropriate processes and knowledge to develop, evaluate, and share successful programs. Efforts should be aimed at helping to reinforce the sharing of “pearls of



To optimize messaging and communication for HPV prevention, the non-governmental organization (NGO) should:

- ◆ Provide relevant knowledge addressing specific knowledge gaps within the specific population (i.e.: on HPV, HPV-associated cancers, and prevention methods)²
- ◆ Address motivational factors to influence behaviours and help identify benefits and barriers of HPV prevention methods (i.e.: physician’s recommendation for HPV vaccination)²
- ◆ Provide specific behavioural building skills (i.e.: communication skills training, and how to access prevention methods)²



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wisdom” across NGOs to share lessons learned to replicate successful programs and partnerships. As such, best practice databases are essential to accelerate actions, sharing knowledge, values and outcomes, with accountability and transparency for public health stakeholders.

Join us, engage, and help us build a strong civil society space to reach the World Health Organization's 2030 goals to be on the path to eliminate cervical cancer. ■

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

HPV Awareness has received grants from Bayer, GSK, Roche and Merck.

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2. Perez K Giselle, Cruess G Dean, Strauss M Nicole. A brief information-motivation-behavioural skills intervention to promote human papillomavirus vaccination among college-aged women. *Psychol Res Behav Manag.* 2016;9:285-296. doi: 10.2147/PRBM.S112504. Available from: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5074705/>

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