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Role of the Dental Community in HPV Vaccination Promotion

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Introduction

- Human Papillomavirus (HPV): Causes cervical, anal, vaginal, penile and oropharyngeal (OP) cancer.
- Nine-valent HPV vaccine: safe/effective; protects against strains associated with oncogenicity and anogenital warts.
- HPV vaccine uptake low due to knowledge gaps and concerns re: teen sexuality and vaccine safety/efficacy.¹
- Community/provider-focused strategies are more effective than educational campaigns to improve coverage.²
- Oral health care providers may help promote HPV vaccine delivery due to increasing awareness of link to OP cancers.³
- Project Goal:** Assess knowledge and current HPV vaccine counseling practices among dentists and dental hygienists to improve HPV vaccine promotion in routine dental practice and increase vaccine coverage and cancer prevention in Vermont.

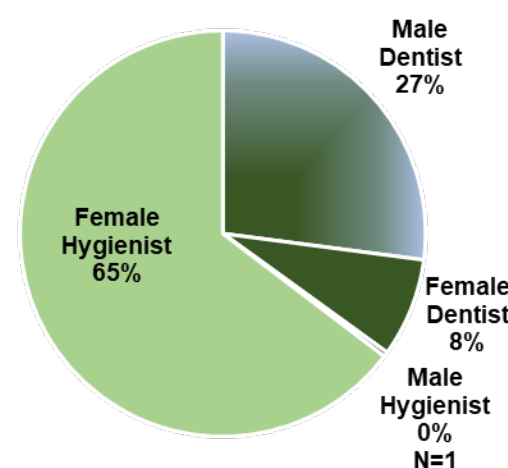
Methods

- Key Informant Interviews:** semi-structured interviews with dentist, dental hygienist, dental educator
 - Interview transcripts qualitatively analyzed with grounded theory approach.⁴
- Provider survey:** designed to assess knowledge, beliefs, practices and barriers regarding HPV vaccination
- Distributed to practicing VT dentists and dental hygienists via email and completed electronically; upon completion, could choose to receive HPV dental patient education materials
- Free response text analyzed using coding framework generated from the key informant interviews

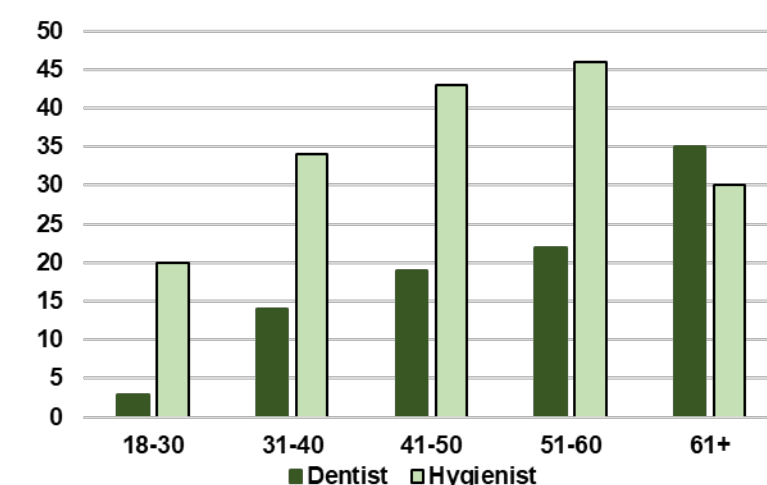
Demographics

- Sent to 392 dentists and 559 dental hygienists with response rate of **34%**
- 266 completed surveys were eligible for analysis (93 dentists, 173 hygienists)
- 27% of respondents requested HPV educational materials

Completed Surveys by Gender & Profession



Survey Response by Age and Profession



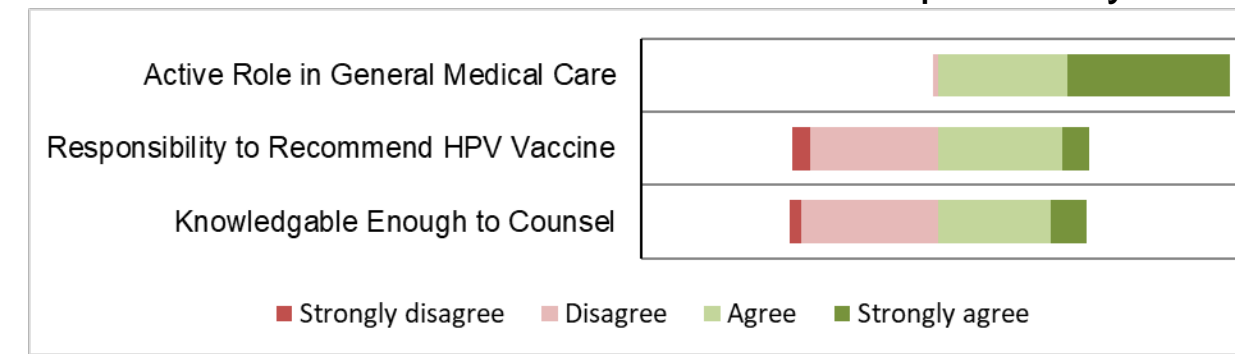
Survey Results

Knowledge Assessment

- No difference between dentists and hygienists on 6/7 True/False questions re: HPV vaccine knowledge
- Dentists (78%) more accurate than hygienists (63%) re: "HPV vaccination causes serious side effects" (p<.05)

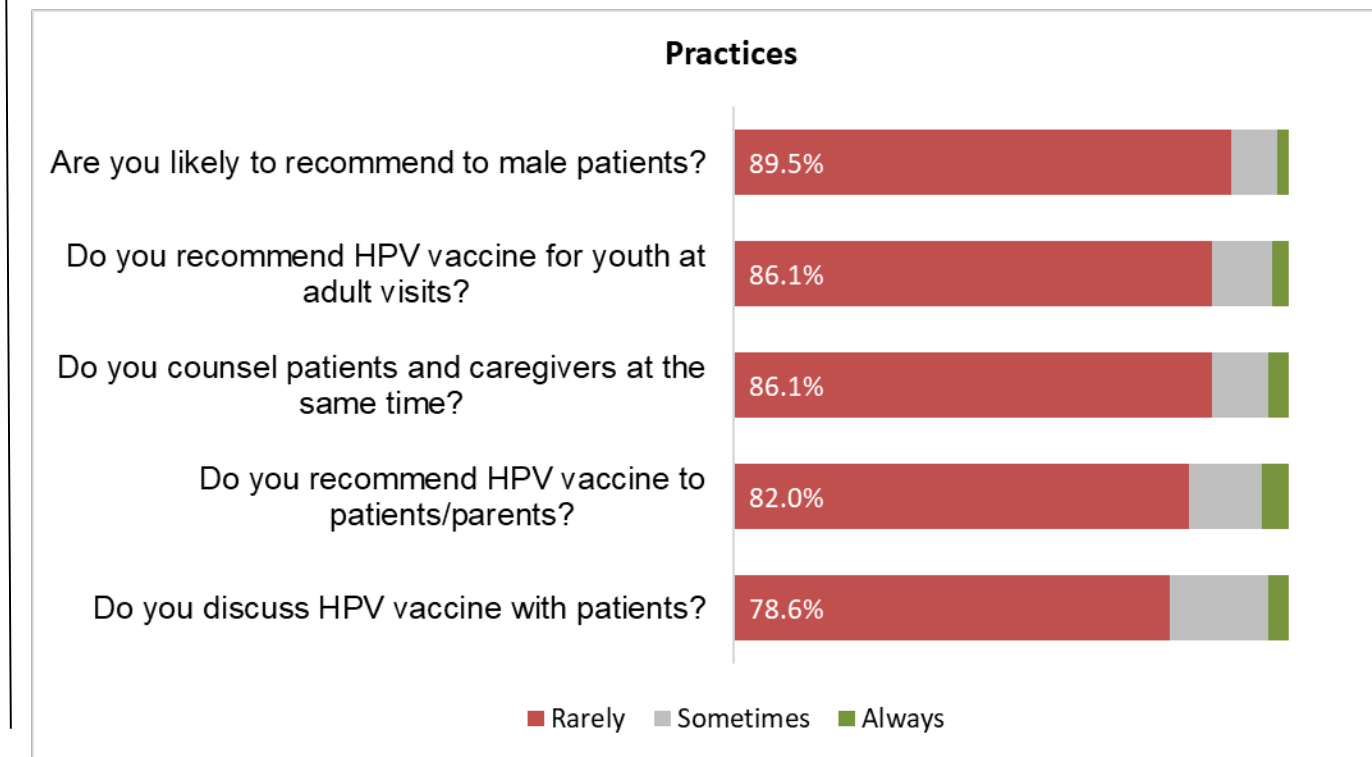
Provider Beliefs

- 90% believe it is important to play an active role in general medical care, but ~50% lack the knowledge to recommend the vaccine and/or believe it is not their responsibility.



Practices

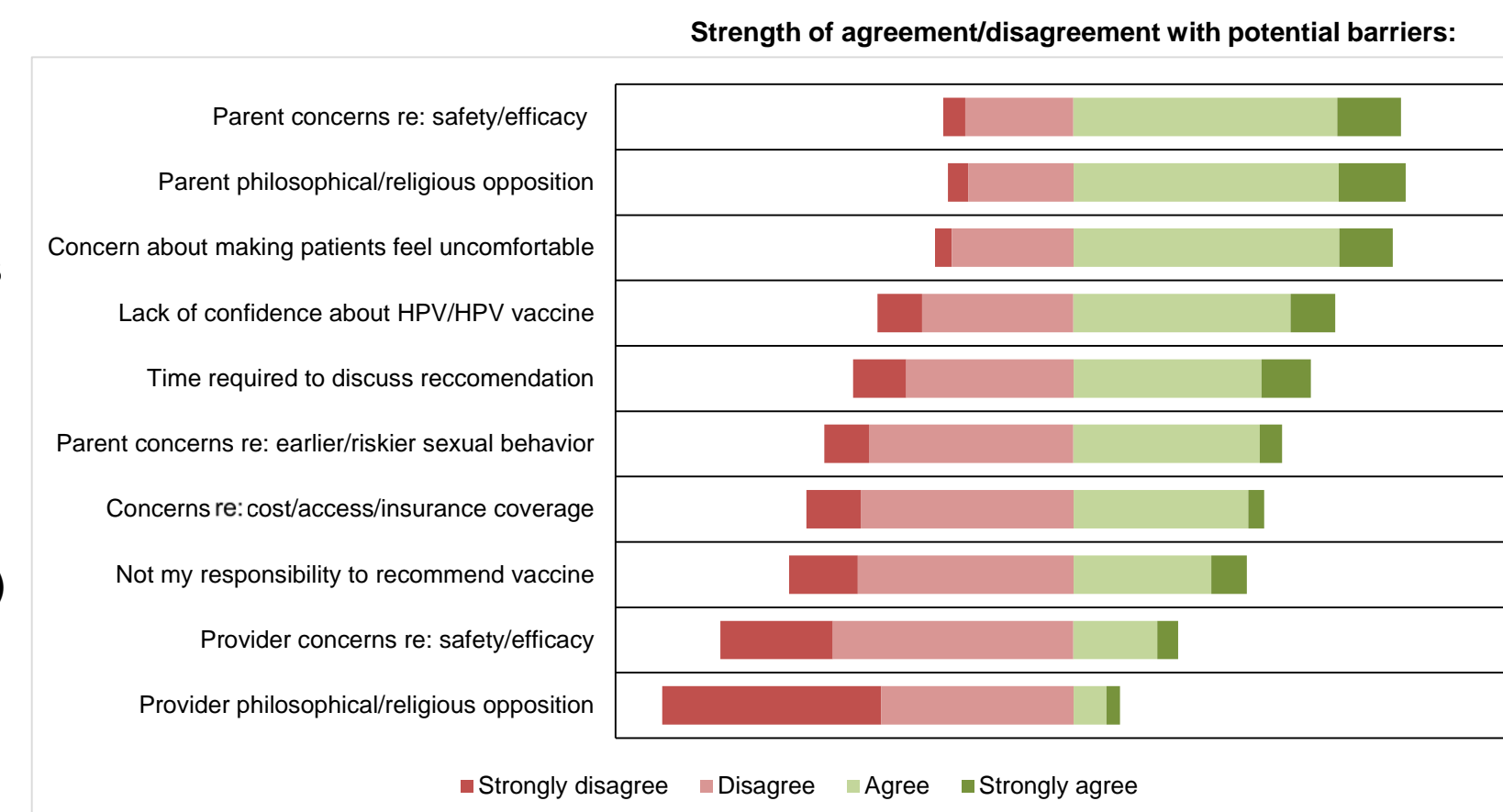
- Both dentists and hygienists rarely discuss or recommend HPV vaccination



Respondent Perception of Potential Barriers to Recommending HPV Vaccine

- Four barrier categories extracted from key informant interview analysis: provider knowledge/education, patient sensitivity, provider role/responsibility, practice constraints
- Categories were equally represented in analysis of survey free response text
- Provider perception of parental concerns/opposition is a greater barrier than their own
- Dentists/hygienists agree on top 4 barriers:
 - Not responsibility of dental provider (27%)
 - Lack of confidence in knowledge (19%)
 - Time constraints (14%)
 - Parent philosophical/religious opposition (11%)

Barriers



In their own words: dental providers on recommending HPV vaccine

"Patients or their parents [would be] wondering why their dentist is recommending a vaccination for a sexually transmitted disease. Some patients look at dental providers as treating teeth only, and they don't connect oral health to the rest of their body." - Dentist

"People do not come for an oral prophylaxis to hear about STDs. I have enough trouble getting patients to floss. This is not my area to discuss. I discuss oral cancer and diabetes, as these issues effect the periodontium." -Dental hygienist



"You may be ahead of your time. We have not received guidance from the American Dental Association that dentists should be involved in the discussion of this vaccine." -Dentist

"Some parents' response is the insinuation that their child (children) would engage in sexual activity and it is none of my business. But this trend will change as more oral health care professionals broach the subject with their patients." -Dental hygienist

Conclusions

- Targeted provider education regarding HPV vaccine and guidelines for oral health care providers may help to address knowledge gaps and increase confidence.
- Providers may also need system supports to incorporate HPV vaccination counseling into practice.
- Although key informant interview analysis was not presented, barriers identified through this process aligned well with barriers reflected in survey results.
- Oral health care providers may overestimate parental philosophical and religious objections to vaccine administration, but further study is needed to confirm this hypothesis.
- High uptake of offered HPV dental patient educational materials suggests unmet need and motivation to incorporate into clinical practice.

References

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