

## **Newsletter 16: Conflicts of Interest in the HPV Vaccine**

**7 April 2013**

It is important that the community can trust that governments are making decisions in the public interest and this is why representatives of government advisory boards are required to declare any potential conflicts of interest (COI). I would like you to be aware of the COI that have been declared in the development and approval of HPV vaccines in global health policies. Here are some of these conflicts and I have provided a link to other declared COI on Australian government advisory boards that are published on my website. The references for this information can be found on the link below.

### **Development of the HPV Vaccine:**

- CSL (pharmaceutical company) funded the research for the development of this vaccine at the University of Queensland 18
- Clinical trials for the vaccine were funded by Merck (manufacturer of the vaccine) (13) and the study was designed, managed, and analysed by Merck in conjunction with external academics 6.

### **The conflicts of interest of the academics include:**

1. Indiana University declared that Merck had signed a confidential agreement that pays the university on the basis of certain landmarks regarding HPV vaccine 6
2. 10 authors of the clinical trials were current or former employees of Merck and 18 other authors, including Bosch, Villa and Munoz (the researchers who claimed HPV 16/18 are the determining and independent cause of cervical cancer) reported receiving consulting fees and having served on paid advisory boards for Merck 6.
3. Some trial investigators had also received consulting fees and served on the advisory board for GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) 6
4. Dr. Bosch had received consulting fees and served on the advisory board for GSK and Digene and he had also received lecture fees from Merck and GSK. Research grants

- were also provided to him from Merck and GSK through his institution to fund the vaccine trials and the epidemiological studies 6.
5. 11 of the authors including Villa and Munoz received lecture fees from Merck, Sanofi-Pasteur, and Merck Sharp and Dohme 6
  6. Dr. Brown and Dr. Skjeldestad received funding from Merck for natural history studies of HPV infection. Dr. Myers received funding from Merck for conducting modelling studies of the effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of the vaccine in different settings.
  7. 17 authors received funding from Merck through their institutions to conduct clinical trials of the vaccine 6
- In 2005 CSL also entered into a cross-licensing agreement with GlaxoSmithKline, the pharmaceutical company producing the competitor HPV vaccine: Cervarix 19
  - From 2003 – 2007 Gardasil was tested for efficacy against pre-cancerous lesions but safety data comparing vaccinated and unvaccinated groups was not collected for this time period 13. There are no long-term studies (1-3 years) of all the health outcomes from the use of Gardasil.
  - Cervical Cancer takes 8 - 25 years to develop and most pre-cancerous lesions in young women are not an indicator of cancer later in life 3. In addition, HPV infection on its own does not progress to cancer 3 therefore the benefits and risks of this vaccine are still unknown in 2013 17.

The complete document with references can be found here

<http://vaccinationdecisions.net/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/The-Conflicts-of-Interest-in-the-Development-of-HPV-vaccine-130406-141025.pdf>

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