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January 18, 2007

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### **CMA Issues Statement on Implementation of HPV Vaccine**

JANUARY 18, 2007 -- The Catholic Medical Association (CMA) – the nation’s largest professional organization of Catholic doctors – has released a position paper on implementation of the new vaccine for HPV, Gardasil®. The CMA encourages the use of this safe, effective, and ethically acceptable vaccine but at the same time rejects efforts at the federal level, and in some states, to mandate that girls be vaccinated against HPV.

According to John Brehany, Ph.D., S.T.L., Executive Director of the CMA, the fact that HPV is spread primarily by sexual contact does not render vaccination against it unethical. Brehany stated, “Healing and preventing diseases, no matter what their source, are acts of mercy and a moral good.” At the same time, Paul Cieslak, M.D., a CMA member with extensive public health experience, noted, “making school attendance conditional on HPV vaccination does not make sense, because girls who are not vaccinated pose no threat, as they would with communicable diseases such as mumps, measles, and polio, to other children attending school.

“Raising vaccination rates is an important public health goal, but that doesn’t justify every measure that might get us there,” Cieslak commented. “Depriving children of an education in the name of a broad public health goal isn’t being fair to them.”

In addition, Brehany pointed out that overriding objections that parents might have to HPV vaccination is a violation of parental rights. Moreover, he explained, at a time when the importance of parental influence and values for teens is increasingly recognized, it would be counterproductive to undermine parents’ sense of responsibility for their children in this sensitive area.

Still, the CMA supports widespread use of Gardasil® for girls and women in the age range for which the vaccine has been recommended by the ACIP, because it is effective, safe, and ethical to use, provided certain conditions are met. Patients and their parents should be given information sufficient to make an informed decision about the vaccine. In addition, the CMA statement explains, support for the vaccine, and similar vaccines in the future, should not be used to undermine support for efforts to promote chastity and to reduce extramarital sexual activity.

The position paper can be found on the CMA’s website, [www.cathmed.org](http://www.cathmed.org).