

## Pharmacists should immediately be mobilised to administer HPV vaccine



### **Students who received first dose of HPV vaccine fell from 80% in 2019 to just 53% in 2020**

30 March 2021: Pharmacists should immediately be mobilised to administer HPV vaccine after an alarming drop off in HPV vaccinations in the last year. This is according to the Irish Pharmacy Union (IPU) which has raised concerns at the significant fall off in the number of students receiving the vaccination. Only 53.6% of students received a first dose of the HPV vaccine in 2020 compared to over 80% in 2019.

School closures and the redeployment of school vaccination teams to COVID-19 vaccine roll-out have interrupted school HPV vaccination programmes.

IPU Secretary General Darragh O'Loughlin has called for this worrying situation to be immediately addressed, saying:

“The fall off in students receiving the HPV vaccination last year is deeply concerning and I have urged the Minister for Health, Stephen Donnelly to allow pharmacists to administer the HPV vaccine immediately. We urgently need to administer HPV vaccine to the 50% of our young people who risk being left behind.

“Pharmacists are trained and experienced vaccinators and have consultation rooms at the ready. They have been vaccinating people against the flu for the last decade, with more than 300,000 flu vaccines having been administered by pharmacists in a six-week period last October

and November.

“Given that the HSE has not yet decided when pharmacies will commence COVID-19 vaccination, this vaccination resource is available right now. Allow pharmacists to help protect our future generations from the morbidity and mortality caused by cervical cancer and other cancers related to HPV”, Mr O’Loughlin continued.

Around 300 people are diagnosed with cervical cancer each year in Ireland with more than nine in ten cervical cancer diagnoses from HPV infections, leading to around 90 deaths every year.

“Last year’s rates are particularly concerning, given the risks of not vaccinating and the strenuous efforts made by the HPV Vaccination Alliance, of which the IPU is a member, to increase HPV vaccination rates. A window of opportunity is now available to increase the vaccination rates substantially by providing a role for pharmacists in providing the HPV vaccine. Government needs to seize this opportunity.”

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