



**PUBLIC PETITION NO.**

**PE01477**

**Name of petitioner**

Jamie Rae on behalf of Throat Cancer Foundation

**Petition title**

Gender neutral Human Papillomavirus vaccination

**Petition summary**

Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to extend the current Human Papillomavirus (HPV) immunisation programme in Scotland to include boys.

**Action taken to resolve issues of concern before submitting the petition**

Throat Cancer Foundation have submitted an Early Day Motion to the House of Commons and have encouraged our supporters to write to their Westminster MPs to raise awareness of this issue. The motion was sponsored by John Robertson MP of the Labour Party. The Early Day Motion has now got 58 signatories with support coming from across the political spectrum. Our charity is, however, registered in Scotland and we wish to highlight this issue in Scotland, not just the UK.

We attended an event called Broader Burden of Human Papillomavirus in the Scottish Parliament on 15th January 2013. This event was organised by Sanofi Pasteur MSD and was attended by Nanette Milne MSP and Patrick Harvie MSP as well as Scotland's head of Human Papillomavirus research Dr Kate Cuschieri. The seminar had two presentations by Dr Martin Donaghy, Medical Director Health Protection Scotland and Dr Ned Powell Senior Lecturer Human Papillomavirus Oncology Group Institute of Cancer and Genetics School of Medicines, University of Cardiff. After this event a parliamentary motion was lodged by Nanette Milne MSP.

In addition we have sought the counsel and gathered the support of 150 medical/public health experts who support our petition statement. They include some world leaders of oncology, epidemiology and other related fields.

We have held informal meetings with Dr Martin Donaghy, Medical Officer for Health Protection Scotland, Professor Heather Cubie, recently retired Director, Scottish HPV Reference Laboratory, Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh, Honorary Professor of Research and Research Management, University of Edinburgh and have engaged with public health bodies in Scotland, these are: NHS Tayside; Dental Public Health and NHS Greater Glasgow. These meetings have been fact finding missions and informal with staff members from a number of different disciplines: medical research, cancer care,

dentistry, public health policy and surgery, not to lobby for support of this petition.

We have held informal meetings with two MSP's which have been to raise awareness of the issue and not to lobby for this petition to be signed. We met Alex Neil MSP on the 4th February 2013 and Angus McDonald MSP on the 18th of February 2013. We have a further meeting with Alex Neil arranged for later this year (date to be confirmed) to discuss the issue of gender neutral vaccination and this petition.

We have sought media coverage for this issue Scotland and UK wide. This has been in the printed press, on-line media, television media and radio. The focus of the media attention was on the Early Day Motion signed by over 50 MP's and the 150 leading medical experts who have signed this petition statement.

## Petition background information

Throat Cancer Foundation is a UK based charity which is dedicated to the support of all people affected by throat cancer and works to prevent future cases of throat and oral cancers. Our work includes developing on-line and print resources for patients and carers, establishing best practice in the treatment and care for cancer patients, advocating and funding research into the treatment and prevention of throat cancers and building a network of patients, carers and medics who have a vested interest in improving services and resources for cancer patients. As part of our commitment to reducing cases of throat cancer we are campaigning to introduce gender neutral vaccination to protect all children from the Human Papillomavirus. We believe that vaccinating females only is an inadequate approach. Gender-neutral vaccination will reduce the impact of the most dangerous strains of Human Papillomavirus, preventing a great many cases of Cervical, Oropharyngeal, Oral, Anal, Penile and Vulvar cancers. By taking action now, we can reduce needless suffering and death, as well as cutting the economic burden of treatment for cancer and genital warts. The current Human Papillomavirus vaccination programme is discriminatory and leaves too many at risk of preventable cancers. We urge immediate action.

The Human Papillomavirus is a highly contagious virus which lives on the skin. There are well over a hundred strains of Human Papillomavirus which are transferred from person to person by skin to skin contact. The virus is extremely contagious and it is estimated that 80% of the population will have an Human Papillomavirus infection at some point in their lifetime. For the majority of people Human Papillomavirus will not cause any serious health issues, their immune system will clear the virus and people might not even know that they have had Human Papillomavirus. For some people though Human Papillomavirus can lead to other more serious diseases including fatal cancers. It is thought that Human Papillomavirus can cause cervical, anal, penile, vulval, vaginal and throat cancers. Human Papillomavirus is known to cause about 5% of all cancer cases worldwide. Human Papillomavirus also is the cause of genital warts and laryngeal papillomas (a childhood condition which is warts on the vocal cords).

The current UK wide Human Papillomavirus vaccination policy is administered by the NHS through the school system. Cancer Research UK has this information about the current policy "in the UK, girls in year 8 at school (aged 12 to 13) are offered the Human Papillomavirus vaccine. Girls have three injections over 6 months. A letter about the vaccine and a consent form is sent to the parents of the girl before she has the vaccine. It is up to her whether she has the vaccine.". The vaccination policy is UK wide and is the same in Scotland. We want this same service being offered to males in the UK with the same method of delivery and consent.

There is a motion in the Scottish Parliament to highlight the broader burden of Human Papillomavirus in Scotland. The name of the motion is S4M-05613 Nanette Milne: Human Papilloma Virus in Scotland; That the Parliament notes with concern the broader burden of the Human papilloma virus (HPV) in Scotland, which, it understands, is thought to be associated with 5% of all cancers; believes that 80% of women will have an HPV infection at some point in their lives; accepts that such infections are common in the genitals and oral cavities of men and women, and are evident in penile, vulval

and vaginal, anal, head and neck and cervical cancers; notes with concern that HPV-related diseases are on the increase, specifically head and neck cancers in men; applauds the Australian, United States and German governments on, it understands, recently extending provision of the HPV vaccine to cover boys as well as girls; believes that this is a major step toward addressing equality issues surrounding female-only HPV vaccination programmes, and urges the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation to consider these examples during the current review of the UK's position.]

While we welcome this awareness raising motion we believe it does not go far enough in calling for the introduction of gender neutral vaccination in Scotland and the inequity of the current vaccination programme cannot be allowed to continue.

The current policy excludes males because of the assumption that "herd immunity" will protect the male population. "Herd immunity" means by vaccinating females this will stop the virus being transmitted to boys. (which is an 80% uptake of the vaccine amongst females will protect the herd from Human Papillomavirus). Herd immunity is a flawed and discriminatory policy which must be addressed as a matter of urgency. By the very nature of herd immunity, if a person is outwith the herd then they will not be protected. This means men who have sex with men (MSM) are excluded and not protected from Human Papillomavirus cancers. This is particularly significant as MSM have the highest burden of anal cancers, which the BMA advises can be prevented with Human Papillomavirus vaccination.

It is not only MSM who are not being protected at the moment. We live in an era where there is a highly mobile population. There are mass movements of population around the globe. While Scotland's "herd" does have good levels of vaccination for our females, the same cannot be said for other countries around the world. Some countries have a vaccine uptake of far less than the 80% required for even herd immunity. By relying on herd immunity we are leaving males vulnerable to Human Papillomavirus. Finally, herd immunity has been seen to be flawed before: rubella inoculation was female only when introduced and it was only after the introduction of gender neutral vaccination did it become effective and fit for purpose.

The precise costs are hard to obtain because commercial confidentiality prohibits the pharmaceutical companies from divulging the costs for the vaccine in the UK. Figures which we obtained from Norway put the cost per vaccination (3 doses) at £45. There are 27,000 12 year old boys in Scotland so costs for the extension on the programme are around £1,215,000 for the vaccinations and the additional administration costs to implement this extension of the programme.

Australia has started to vaccinate it's young men and the vaccine is being recommended in the USA and Canada for young men. Scotland should take this opportunity to be at the vanguard of the global Human Papillomavirus epidemic and start protecting all of it's citizens as a matter of urgency. The more time we spend procrastinating, the more lives we are putting in danger.

### Unique web address

<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/GettingInvolved/Petitions/protectboysfromhpv>

### Related information for petition

The Throat Cancer Website has more information on our website [www.throatcancerfoundation.org](http://www.throatcancerfoundation.org) about the work we do and also about Human Papillomavirus and our campaign to get boys vaccinated.

Here are some links to media coverage of our efforts to include boys in the national Human Papillomavirus vaccination programme.

Channel 5

News [http://www.throatcancerfoundation.org/latest/news/156\\_tcf\\_on\\_channel\\_5\\_news](http://www.throatcancerfoundation.org/latest/news/156_tcf_on_channel_5_news)

Links to articles about Throat Cancer Foundation

[http://www.throatcancerfoundation.org/latest/news/149\\_tcf\\_in\\_the\\_news](http://www.throatcancerfoundation.org/latest/news/149_tcf_in_the_news)

NHS Choices article about Throat Cancer Foundation -

<http://www.nhs.uk/news/2013/February/Pages/Charity-calls-for-boys-to-get-Human-Papillomavirus-jab.aspx>

American Oncologist Dr Sturgis stating the case for GNV in relation to throat/oropharyngeal

cancer. [http://www.throatcancerfoundation.org/latest/blogs/159\\_dr\\_sturgis\\_from\\_m\\_d\\_anderso](http://www.throatcancerfoundation.org/latest/blogs/159_dr_sturgis_from_m_d_anderso)  
Papillomavirus

Professor Margaret Stanley has made the case for boys to be vaccinated in the journal Nature [http://www.nature.com/nature/journal/v488/n7413\\_supp/full/488S10a.html](http://www.nature.com/nature/journal/v488/n7413_supp/full/488S10a.html). This does require payment to access full text.

We have a presentation about the charity and the Human Papillomavirus problem which can be accessed

here. [http://www.throatcancerfoundation.org/assets/0000/1184/1301\\_TCF\\_PRESENTATION\\_V](http://www.throatcancerfoundation.org/assets/0000/1184/1301_TCF_PRESENTATION_V)

**Do you wish your petition to be hosted on the Parliament's website to collect signatures online?**

YES

**How many signatures have you collected so far?**

150

**Closing date for collecting signatures online**

03 / 05 / 2013

**Comments to stimulate online discussion**

Gender Neutral Vaccination will protect Scottish citizens from a host of Human Papillomavirus related diseases including several cancers which can be fatal. Why is Human Papillomavirus vaccination not offered to all 12 year old boys in Scotland as a matter of urgency? Not vaccinating boys is a danger to public health and also is discriminatory.

By not vaccinating males the Scottish Government is failing to offer the best and most adequate protection for all. The policy can be seen as particularly discriminatory against gay men and men who have sex with men. Why should MSM not be offered the same protection as the rest of Scotland's citizens?

Human Papillomavirus vaccination is most effective when administered before sexual activity begins and therefore should be offered at the same age as females currently get the vaccine. Why offer the vaccine to sexually active men who have sex with men when it would be more effective administered at school age?

Medical experts have already signed this petition stating that a gender neutral vaccination policy will save lives. These are medical professionals dealing with the harsh reality of Human Papillomavirus related diseases. Can we afford to ignore their advice?

Australia, Canada and the USA currently recommend gender neutral vaccination and Scotland should not be lagging behind when it comes to protecting people from Human

Papillomavirus. Australia begins vaccinating boys in April 2013. Why is Scotland not living up to it's repuataion as a progressive and equal society?