Title: Developing a community-based initiative to reduce the high incidence of cervical cancer in White County, Arkansas.

Type of Poster: Research in Progress

Purpose: The incidence of cervical cancer in White County, Arkansas (13.9 cases per 100,000) is substantially higher than the national incidence (8.3 per 100,000), which presents significant challenges for health care providers. The disease, linked to human papillomavirus (HPV), primarily affects women over the age of 30. Despite the current availability of an HPV vaccine, White County continues to have the second highest incidence of cervical cancer in the state. Therefore, the objective of this multi-staged study is to develop educational tools and cancer-prevention measures to supplement current resources offered by local, state and county health care officials.

Methods: Upon Institutional Review Board approval, Harding University pharmacy students developed and distributed surveys to local community leaders and healthcare providers to assess local resident/patient behaviors, clinical practice standards, and community awareness of cervical cancer prevention tools. Data analyzed from 17 surveys indicated a consensus among those surveyed, of the need to increase awareness of HPV’s link to cervical cancer and the availability of preventative measures, including vaccination. In an effort to decrease the incidence of HPV and cervical cancer, the next phase of this initiative will focus on the following areas:

- Create informational tools, written in non-technical language, to be used by health care providers for facilitating patient education and awareness.
- Develop educational tools that target community leaders, school-age children, and their parents to increase awareness of HPV and cervical cancer prevention.
- Provide vaccinations for patients ages 9-26 and adults ages 18-26 not covered by the state’s Medicaid program.

Pharmacy students, supervised by Harding faculty, will develop educational materials and initiate vaccination days to administer HPV vaccines to eligible patients. The intent is to collaborate within a multidisciplinary team of pharmacy, nursing, and physician assistant students to carry out this service.