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Expanded Access to Health Care Brings Great Opportunities in Cervical Cancer Prevention, but there's Still Work to Do

RTP, NC —The American Sexual Health Association (ASHA) and the National Cervical Cancer Coalition (NCCC) recognize each January as Cervical Health Awareness Month, and this New Year is especially brimming with promise as we work to eliminate cervical cancer.

Each year in the U.S. approximately 12,000 women are diagnosed with cervical cancer, and more than 4,000 die as a result. In the U.S. and around the world, poor women are hit hardest by the disease. The true tragedy of the disease is that cervical cancer screening tests and vaccines exist that can prevent virtually every case.

ASHA/NCCC President and CEO Lynn B. Barclay says expanding access to these life-saving tools is a priority and notes we have a powerful new ally as we enter 2014. “The launch of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA) means that health care is becoming a reality for millions who were previously shut out of the system,” she says. “While the ACA has benefits that touch us all I am especially excited about the impact on sexual health and women, as the law requires insurance plans to provide access to cervical cancer screening (Pap tests and, when appropriate, HPV tests) with no co-pay.”

Barclay notes that vaccines along with tests and counseling for sexually transmitted infections (STIs) are also covered by the ACA. “While the health benefits are significant, I also want to point out that providing access to these and other preventive services mean we’ll be spending our health care dollars more wisely, equitably, and cost-effectively. We have the tools to prevent cervical cancer, and it’s crucial we now take advantage of these new opportunities to make sure we provide them all women.” For Cervical Health Awareness Month materials, including social media resources and free downloads, visit the [ASHA](#) and [NCCC](#) websites. Also, ASHA’s website has an [ACA FAQ](#) with links to specific resources.

The American Sexual Health Association (ASHA) is a not-for-profit organization founded in 1914 to improve the health of individuals, families, and communities, with a focus on educating about and preventing sexually transmitted infections. ASHA’s educational web sites include: www.ashasexualhealth.org, www.iwannaknow.org (teen site), and www.quierosaber.org (Spanish language site).

Founded in 1996, The National Cervical Cancer Coalition (NCCC) is a growing coalition of people coping with cervical cancer and HPV related issues. The Coalition primarily consist of women, family members, friends and caregivers, but also includes women's groups, cytotechnologists, health care providers, bio-tech companies, cancer researchers, and organizations providing cervical cancer detection programs. Their web sites are www.nccc-online.org and www.giahc.org.

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