



March 1, 2004

Representative Henry Waxman
2204 RHOB
Washington, DC 20515

Representative Nita Lowey
2329 RHOB
Washington, DC 20515

Representative Sherrod Brown
2332 RHOB
Washington, DC 20515

Representative Elijah Cummings
1632 LHOB
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representatives Waxman, Lowey, Brown and Cummings:

The recent "Dear Colleague" letter (February 10, 2004) raises several criticisms regarding The Medical Institute's report titled "The Human Papillomavirus: A Major Unrecognized Epidemic." As our report states, cervical cancer afflicts over 12,000 women annually, and kills more than 4,000 in the United States. Esophageal cancers are secondary to earlier human papilloma virus (HPV) infections. We would like to respond to you. First, your response suggests that The Medical Institute's report "will undermine public confidence in condoms as our best defense against [STDs]."

Condoms, however, are not "our best defense against sexually transmitted diseases." According to the National Institutes of Health (NIH)¹ there is no evidence that condoms protect against most sexually transmitted diseases including chlamydia (p.17), chancroid (p.21), and syphilis (p.23). Additionally, as noted in our report, "condoms do not provide any protection from HPV infections in females, although their use may reduce the risk of HPV-associated diseases such as genital warts in men and cervical dysplasia in women." In fact, the only disease for which condoms actually reduce risk by more than half is HIV. And on that topic we state, "...consistent use of condoms reduces the risk of HIV infection by approximately 85% in males and females."²

Our statements on condoms (and how well they *do* or *don't* work for given STDs) are corroborated by the NIH and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) – our nation's premier public health agencies. In a recent report to Congress, the CDC states, "the available scientific evidence is

¹ National Institutes of Health (NIH). *Scientific Evidence on Condom Effectiveness for Sexually Transmitted Infections*. July 20, 2001. NIH Web site. Available at <http://www.niaid.nih.gov/dmid/stds/condom>. Accessed February 20, 2004.

² The Medical Institute for Sexual Health. *Human Papillomavirus: A Major Unrecognized Epidemic*. 2004. Austin, TX:5.

recommend condoms as a primary prevention strategy for the prevention of genital HPV infection. Similarly, NIH's panel on condom effectiveness concluded, "...there is no epidemiologic evidence that condom use reduced the risk of HPV infection."⁴

According to *Public Health and Preventive Medicine*,⁵ "Prevention [has] three components: primary, secondary, and tertiary. Primary prevention means *preventing the occurrence* of disease...Secondary prevention means *early detection and intervention*, ...[and is] epitomized [by] screening programs."

Like you, MI aggressively supports early detection and screening programs for all sexually transmitted diseases, including HPV. MI commends your efforts to raise awareness about this important domestic and international issue (more than 200,000 women die yearly of cervical cancer outside the United States). I presume, that you actually intended to mention the new liquid Pap test (which increases the sensitivity of the test from around 60% - 70% to greater than 90%) rather than the older Pap smear.⁷

However, *secondary prevention* efforts such as screening will never eradicate cervical cancer from the United States. The risk of HPV infection and cervical cancer are increased by early sexual debut, multiple partners, and a partner who engages in high-risk sexual behavior.⁸ We must also promote *primary prevention* through delayed sexual debut, faithfulness with an uninfected lifetime partner, and reduction in the number of partners – currently the only way to significantly reduce the numbers of women exposed to cervical cancer due to HPV infection.

Sincerely,



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Founder/Chairman
The Medical Institute



Kate Hendricks, MD, MPH & TM
Director of Scientific Affairs
The Medical Institute

³ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). *Report to Congress: Prevention of Genital Herpes and Papillomavirus Infection*. January 2004. CDC Web site. Available at <http://www.cdc.gov/std/HPV/2004HPV/Report.pdf>. Accessed February 20, 2004.

⁴ National Institutes of Health. *Scientific Evidence on Condom Effectiveness for Sexually Transmitted Infections*. July 20, 2001. NIH Web site. Available at <http://www.niaid.nih.gov/dmid/stds/condomreport.pdf>. Accessed February 20, 2004.

⁵ Last JM, ed. *Public Health and Preventive Medicine*. 12th ed. Norwalk, CT; Appleton-Century-Crofts; 1982.

⁶ Snyder U. A Look at Cervical Cancer. *Medscape Ob/Gyn & Women's Health* [serial online]. 2004. Web site. Available at <http://www.medscape.com/viewarticle/452727>.

⁷ Austin RM. Human Papillomavirus Reporting: Minimizing Patient and Laboratory Risk. *Arch Pathol Lab Med*. 2003;127:973-977

⁸ National Cancer Institute (NCI). "Human Papilloma Viruses and Cancer." October 15, 2002. NC Web site. Available at http://cis.nci.nih.gov/fact/3_20.htm. Accessed February 23, 2004. [Joffe GP, Foxman B, et al. Multiple Partners and Partner Choice as Risk Factors for Sexually Transmitted Disease Among