ABSTRACT

Background: American Indians in the Northern Plains face significant cancer disparities, including for HPV cancers. Northern Plains American Indian women are four times more likely to get and die from cervical cancer than the general population. The HPV vaccination prevents strains of HPV that cause 70% of HPV cancers. HPV vaccination rates among American Indians are higher than the general population, but remain low compared to other adolescent vaccines.

Objectives: Focus group questions were designed to answer four primary research questions:

1. Where are the knowledge gaps about the HPV vaccine?
2. What are attitudes and beliefs about the HPV vaccine?
3. What other barriers are preventing parents from vaccinating their children?
4. How can HPV vaccine educational materials be improved for American Indian communities?

Methods: A qualitative, cross-sectional study was designed using focus groups to assess attitudes and beliefs about the HPV vaccine among parents of American Indian children ages 7-12 in order to develop educational materials.

Results: Participants reported a need for more knowledge and awareness about the vaccine in their communities. Other themes included concerns with vaccine safety, the need for improved and American Indian specific messaging, and approval of cancer-centered messages.

Conclusions: Several significant themes emerged that diverge with findings from other populations, most notably that no participants were concerned that vaccinating their children would lead to early sexual initiation. These differentials underscore the need for culturally appropriate and specific educational materials and interventions to increase vaccination rates.