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## **MOUNTAIN WEST PARENTAL ATTITUDES AND BARRIERS RELATED TO HPV VACCINATION IN RURAL SETTINGS**

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HPV is the most common sexually transmitted infection (STI) in the United States and can cause the following cancers: cervical, vulvar, vaginal, penile, anal and oropharyngeal. There is a vaccine to prevent 9 strains of HPV most commonly associated with cancer and genital warts. Unfortunately, rates of HPV Vaccination in the Rural Mountain West (RMW) which includes Utah, Nevada, Arizona, Montana and Colorado are markedly low.

The objective of this thesis was to examine factors associated with HPV vaccine receipt among children of eligible age in the RMW as reported by parents/caregivers. Participants were 34 parents/caregivers of children ages 11-17 in the RMW who were recruited through 6 partner clinics affiliated with the Intermountain West HPV Vaccination Coalition. Anonymous surveys were completed by parents and included questions about HPV vaccination knowledge, attitudes and barriers. Data were summarized descriptively, and chi-squares tests were used to analyze the relationships between demographic variables and general uncertainty about which vaccines to get children, parent/caregivers' support for vaccinating 11-12-year-olds for HPV, and actual vaccine receipt among participants' children.

The most common reason for not receiving HPV vaccination for one's child or children was lack of general vaccine knowledge. Significant relationships between religious identification, caregiver age, caregiver education, and HPV vaccine receipt were identified. Uncertainty regarding child vaccine recommendations was also identified as a barrier, indicating that educational interventions may be useful to increase HPV vaccine series initiation and completion. Higher levels of caregiver education were significantly associated with reported belief in the recommended HPV vaccine schedule. Specifically, interventions targeting religious groups to promote the vaccine, particularly Catholics, other Christians, and members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (LDS), parents who are younger, as well as parents with a college education or higher, could also improve HPV vaccination rates.