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## **U.S. and European Advocacy Groups Launch United, Global Campaign to Prevent Cervical Cancer**

***Coalition Promotes the Pearl of Wisdom™  
as Worldwide Symbol for Cervical Cancer Prevention***

Washington, DC --- January 14, 2009 --- Marking Cervical Cancer Awareness Month in the United States, a coalition of U.S. women's health advocacy groups, policymakers, healthcare providers and others is partnering with their European counterparts in a united, global awareness campaign to prevent cervical cancer worldwide. The *Pearl of Wisdom Campaign to Prevent Cervical Cancer* ([www.PearlofWisdom.us](http://www.PearlofWisdom.us)) will raise awareness of cervical cancer, encourage women to take advantage of the means that are now available to prevent it, and work to make sure that these methods are accessible to girls and women around the globe – particularly to the underserved populations that have much higher rates of cervical cancer. The campaign will promote the Pearl of Wisdom as the global symbol for cervical cancer prevention and will help all participating groups unite behind a core set of messages.

“Cervical cancer devastates too many women's lives around the world, with nearly 300,000 women dying from this disease each year,” said Dr. Anne Szarewski, interim president of the Brussels, Belgium-based European Cervical Cancer Association (ECCA), which initiated the campaign. “However, research has established that cervical cancer is caused by persistent infection with a very common virus called the human papillomavirus (HPV), whose presence is seen in 99.7% of all cervical cancers. So, almost all cervical cancers are now preventable through organized screening with Pap tests, HPV tests and immunization programs with HPV vaccines.”

Participating groups in the U.S. include the American Medical Women's Association, the American Social Health Association, the Association of Reproductive Health Professionals, the Balm In Gilead, the Coalition of Labor Union Women, the Global Summit of Women, the Hicks Foundation, the National Association of Nurse Practitioners in Women's Health, the National Council of Women's Organizations, the National Women's Health Resource Center, the Society for Women's Health Research, Tamika and Friends, Women In Government, the Yellow Umbrella Organization, and others.

“Cervical cancer can be virtually eliminated,” said Elizabeth Battaglino Cahill, RN, Executive Director of the National Women's Health Resource Center. “Women need to ask their clinician for a Pap test and, if they are 30 or older, an HPV test, and they should get the HPV vaccine for their daughters. If these resources aren't available to them, they should advocate for prevention programs in their communities that follow current medical guidelines.” Ms. Cahill's organization will feature the Pearl of Wisdom campaign on its site, [www.healthywomen.org](http://www.healthywomen.org), a leading resource for women's health information.

In addition to a media outreach program, examples of planned activities in the U.S. include:

- Attendees of the National Council of Women's Organizations Inaugural Ball on January 17<sup>th</sup> and the Asian Pacific American Pearl Presidential Inaugural Gala on January 19<sup>th</sup> in Washington, DC, will receive the pearl of wisdom pins.
- Rock musician and cervical cancer survivor Christine Baze will distribute the pins as part of her Yellow Umbrella Tour concert series in cities around the globe.
- The DC Chapter of the Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW) and the AFL-CIO Community Services Agency distributed pins at the NBC 4 Health and Fitness Expo in Washington, DC.
- Through Women In Government, state legislators from across the nation will distribute Pearl of Wisdom pins to their constituents and colleagues, as well as display information about the Campaign on their websites.

Pearl of Wisdom pins are available at [www.PearlofWisdom.us](http://www.PearlofWisdom.us) for \$6.95 each and are also available in bulk. All proceeds go to the U.S. Pearl of Wisdom Campaign Fund, dedicated to the support of U.S.-based cervical cancer prevention activities. Visitors can also send "virtual" Pearl of Wisdom pins through the website.

"The elimination of cervical cancer is now a realizable goal and the Pearl of Wisdom is the ideal symbol to spread this powerful message. It is my hope that women around the world and, indeed, everyone takes this symbol to heart and supports our campaign to ultimately eliminate cervical cancer. It is vital that we all work together to ensure that women and their families do not continue to suffer from this terrible disease. This battle can and must be won," said Dr. Szarewski.

#### **About Cervical Cancer**

Cervical cancer is the second most common cancer in women worldwide. In the U.S., the American Cancer Society estimates that in 2008, 11,070 women will have been diagnosed with cervical cancer and 3,870 women will have died of the disease. Cervical cancer is caused by persistent infections with high-risk types of the human papillomavirus (HPV). HPV is a very common sexually transmitted infection that 3 of 4 adults will have at some time in their lives. Most of these infections go away on their own without treatment. Infections that do not go away on their own can lead to cervical cancer.

A Pap test is the traditional method used for cervical cancer screening. An HPV test identifies women who are infected with high-risk types of HPV that could potentially lead to cervical cancer. Clinical studies suggest that screening with both a Pap test and an HPV test offers women aged 30 and older the best protection against cervical cancer. An HPV vaccine is now FDA-approved for girls and young women ages 9-26. It has been shown to be 100% effective – in women not previously infected – at preventing infection with the two most common types of HPV that cause approximately 70% of all cervical cancers. HPV vaccination does not protect against all the HPV types that can cause cervical cancer, however, meaning that women who have been vaccinated still need to be screened to protect against the HPV types that are not covered by the vaccine.

#### **About the European Cervical Cancer Association**

The Pearl of Wisdom campaign's European partner, the European Cervical Cancer Association (ECCA), has 100 institutional members from across Europe including cancer charities, cancer treatment centers, university teaching hospitals and health education organizations. The ECCA was established specifically to coordinate a Europe-wide public health education program that would raise awareness of cervical cancer and how it can be prevented. The *Pearl of Wisdom Campaign to Prevent Cervical Cancer* marks the ECCA's efforts to expand its work beyond Europe. For more information on the ECCA, visit [www.ecca.info](http://www.ecca.info).

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