

# Women's health study focuses on HPV

With all of the marketing efforts pharmaceutical company Merck has done to promote the cervical cancer vaccine Gardasil, it seems rare for a college-aged woman not to know about the human papillomavirus, or HPV. However, there is still a lot to learn about HPV.

Certain types of HPV cause warts on the hands or feet, while others can cause genital warts or cervical abnormalities that can ultimately lead to cervical cancer. In 90% of women, the immune system eliminates the virus before she is aware she has an infection.

The Women's Care Center within Student Health Services and the University's School of Medicine have teamed up to study the human papillomavirus in college women. This study, titled the Carolina Women's Care Study, is an ongoing project funded by a grant from the National Center on Minority Health and Health Disparities.

The study is co-directed by Drs. Kim E. Creek and Lucia Pirisi-Creek, professors at the School of Medicine. Carolyn Banister, a doctoral student in biomedical sciences, serves as the study coordinator, and Julie Steele is the nurse practitioner. The study sites are the Women's Care Center (located within the Thomson Student Health Center) and the School of Medicine.

A goal of the study is to understand why some women clear the HPV infection and others do not. The study is also exploring the role of the immune system and several lifestyle factors that influence HPV clearance.



This study follows participants during their enrollment at the University with biannual pelvic exams, Pap tests, and a confidential lifestyle survey. The initial visit includes a one-time blood draw. Benefits to our participants include free Pap tests, closely monitored healthcare, and a nominal monetary gift after the fourth visit.

Freshmen female students who are enrolled full time at the University and are between the ages of 18-22 are eligible to join. Students do not need to be sexually active to participate in the study. Being part of the study will not alter a participant's healthcare treatment.

For more information, contact Julie Steele, WHNP at [steele2@mailbox.sc.edu](mailto:steele2@mailbox.sc.edu), call the Women's Care Center at (803) 777-6816 or visit the study's website at [www.carolinawomensstudy.com](http://www.carolinawomensstudy.com).



-- Carolyn Banister is the Carolina Women's Care study coordinator.