



For Immediate Release
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HPV Vaccine and Quality Improvement Issues Headline NMA Colloquium

Washington, DC, March 29...The Eighth Annual National Colloquium on African American Health drew more than 150 medical practitioners, scholars, and state legislators who discussed policies and practices concerning human papilloma virus (HPV) vaccine and pay for performance, among other critical issues. The annual event, sponsored by the National Medical Association (NMA), is a major four-day conference that focuses on current medical topics. This year's colloquium was held from Saturday, March 24 through Tuesday, March 27 at the Westin Arlington Gateway in Arlington, VA.

In his welcoming remarks at the opening session, NMA President Albert W. Morris, Jr., M.D. reminded participants of the significance of this year's Colloquium theme: "The Quality Movement and Its Impact on Healthcare Disparities." Dr. Morris said that in looking at quality control features, physicians and policymakers need to understand the full implications of such procedures on minority patient access and quality of care. For example, he pointed out that certain quality control measures, though well-intended, may severely impact the viability of minority physicians who generally have a large caseload of sicker patients. He asked attendees to consider whether the quality movement would hurt or help the national effort to eradicate racial and ethnic disparities in healthcare.

The panel discussion on *HPV Vaccine: Protecting the Next Generation of Women* provoked a whirlwind of controversy and commentary. HPV, the most commonly sexually transmitted infection in the U.S., is associated with cervical cancer, which, in the words of former NMA president Natalie Carroll, M.D. "makes it a public health issue and not a sexual issue." The HPV vaccine, administered in a series of three shots over a six-month period, was recently licensed by the Food and Drug Administration for use in girls and young women, ages 9-26. For optimum efficacy, the vaccine should be given to girls and young women before they become sexually active.

Two sessions focused on Pay for Performance (P4P). *An Assessment of the Risks and Benefits of P4P for Vulnerable Patients and the Physicians Who Care for Them* was addressed by Robert L. Mallett, J.D. Senior VP of Worldwide

Policy and Public Affairs, Pfizer, Inc. Another session, titled *What a Difference a Year Makes –Update on the National Debate Surrounding Pay for Performance* examined how P4P impacts minorities. The panel included Priscilla Ross, Legislative Director, Office of U.S. Senator Ben Cardin; Julius Hobson, Senior Policy Advisor Powell Goldstein LLP; Bruce Siegel, M.D. M.P.H. GWU School of Public Health and Services; and Peggy Tighe, J.D. of Strategic Health Care.

It was noted that the call for P4P is not as strong as it was under the Republican-controlled Congress and that there is no evidence that P4P results in better healthcare. Quality demonstration projects sponsored by the Office of CMS (Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services), are in affluent and healthy areas of the country, thereby giving a false sense of its national impact. The NMA announced its plan to establish a quality demonstration project, which will be reflective of the population it serves.

Each year the Colloquium hosts a Health Policy Awards Dinner whereby individuals are recognized for outstanding contributions to health care and health care reform. This year's recipients were:

Marian Wright Edelman, Founder and President of the Children's Defense Fund, who received the President's Award;
 Lonnie Joe, M.D., President of the Detroit Medical Society, who received the James M. Whittico, Jr., M.D. Community Service Award;
 Vivian W. Pinn, M.D., Director of the Office of Research on Women's Health, National Institutes of Health, who received the Louis Stokes Health Policy Award.

Rep. James E. Clyburn, D-SC, House Majority Whip, U.S. House of Representatives, gave the keynote address at the awards dinner and spoke of the critical need for physicians and lawmakers to work collaboratively toward the important goal of eliminating health disparities.

In the sessions about HPV, Colloquium attendees vigorously debated the pros and cons of vaccination. It is far too soon to have mandatory HPV was one school of thought expressed as well as such vaccines would encourage high risk activity while other attendees agreed, and pointed to the moral and ethical issues involved in mandatory vaccination against a sexually transmitted disease. On the other end of the spectrum, participants stated that the protective benefits against cervical cancer far outweigh any discomfort people may have against a mandatory policy. Dr. Carol Brown, a gynecological oncologist at Sloan Kettering Hospital in New York, spoke about the process of developing the HPV vaccine and the importance of mandatory vaccination. She said that vaccines currently cost about \$365 per person as opposed to the thousands of dollars to treat cervical cancer.

The National Medical Association has indicated its support for the vaccine but not necessarily mandatory usage. The NMA encourages parents of minor girls to discuss the benefits and risks of vaccination with their family physicians. The HPV vaccine has been added to the list of recommended vaccines by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

The Colloquium provided an opportunity for combined meetings between representatives of the National Medical Association, National Black Caucus of State Legislators (NBCSL), and the NMA Auxiliary. On Tuesday, the last day of the Colloquium, NMA physicians proceeded to Capitol Hill to visit with Congressional representatives regarding legislative strategies and priorities that address health disparities.

Founded in 1895, the National Medical Association is the nation's oldest and largest medical association representing the interests of more than 30,000 African American physicians and their patients. The NMA advocates for policies that would assure equitable and quality health care for all people.

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