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**Media Contact: Sara Finger
(608) 251-1039**

WAWH Celebrates New Prevention Opportunity
Highlights HPV Vaccine during National Women's Health Week

Madison – In an ongoing effort to recognize National Women's Health Week, the Wisconsin Alliance for Women's Health (WAWH) is working to raise awareness of the new HPV Vaccine and the power of prevention.

In June of 2006, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) approved the first vaccine developed to prevent cervical cancer, genital warts, and other diseases caused by certain types of HPV. The vaccine, Gardasil®, protects against four HPV types, which together cause 70% of cervical cancers and 90% of genital warts.

Each year, about 10,000 women in the U.S. are diagnosed with cervical cancer, and 3,700 women will die from this cancer in the U.S. At least 50% of sexually active people will contract HPV at some time in their lives and currently, 24.9 million women ages 14 to 59 have HPV.

"There is an estimated cost of \$146.4 million a year to treat cervical cancer," said WAWH Director Sara Finger. "To help *prevent* cervical cancer, we now must help spread the word and invest in this new women's health service."

A cost-benefit analysis concluded that vaccination of girls against high-risk HPV subtypes would be cost effective given certain parameters. If all 12-year-old girls currently living in the U.S. were vaccinated, more than 1,300 deaths from cervical cancer could be prevented.

The HPV Vaccine was recommended by the CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) to be given through a series of three shots over a six-month period.

The HPV vaccine is recommended for 11 to 12 year-old girls, and can be given to girls as young as 9. The vaccine is also recommended for 13 to 26 year-old girls/women who have not yet received the vaccine series.

While the HPV Vaccine holds the promise of reducing cervical cancer, the vaccine will NOT protect against all types of HPV that cause cervical cancer, so women will still need regular cervical cancer screening. Women who do not have regular gynecological care are up to seven times more likely to be diagnosed with cervical cancer. Women should start having Pap tests three years after they've become sexually active or when they become 21 years old.

In Wisconsin, programs such as the Well Woman Program provide preventive health screening services to women with little or no health insurance coverage. It pays for mammograms, Pap tests, certain other health screenings, and multiple sclerosis testing for women with high-risk signs of multiple sclerosis.

To learn more about efforts to prevent cervical cancer, visit www.supportwomenshealth.org.

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*The mission of the Wisconsin Alliance for Women's Health (WAWH) is to advance women's health by creating an environment in which the public and elected officials confidently support women's health policy.
To learn more about WAWH, visit our website: www.supportwomenshealth.org*