

# HPV FOTONOVELA: AN OUNCE OF PREVENTION

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[WWW.GETIMMUNIZEDCA.ORG](http://WWW.GETIMMUNIZEDCA.ORG)

### BACKGROUND

In California, Hispanic women have the highest rate of cervical cancer incidence and are two times more likely than non-Hispanic white women to be diagnosed with cervical cancer. According to the American Cancer Society (ACS), Hispanic women are twice as likely to die from cervical cancer as non-Hispanic white women. Through education and regular screenings, and awareness of the HPV vaccine, however, cervical cancer in Latinas can be prevented. But because Hispanic adults have below basic health literacy as compared to their White counterparts and other ethnic groups in the United States, targeted culturally appropriate health information is in dire need.

With this in mind, the California Department of Public Health, Immunization Branch developed a bilingual fotonovela, "An Ounce of Prevention," targeting Latina mothers of 11-and 12-year olds. Similar to a comic-strip, a fotonovela uses drama and a captivating storyline to teach readers about the Human Papillomavirus (HPV), HPV vaccine, and importance of regular Pap tests.

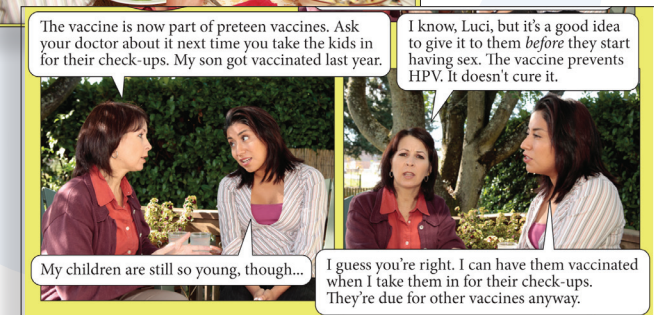
### GOAL

The goal of the fotonovela is to raise awareness about the HPV vaccine among Latina mothers of 11 and 12 year old children and the importance of pap spears for sexually active women over 21 years of age.



### METHODS

- Compiled literature review and focus group findings on enablers, motivators and barriers to HPV vaccination among Latina mothers of adolescents.
- Convened a 10-member advisory committee with bilingual and bicultural health educators and providers statewide, many of whom serve the target audience.
- Worked closely with an experienced vendor to develop the initial draft of the fotonovela, addressing overarching myths while incorporating messages that would resonate with the target audience.
- Administered a pre-and post-test to focus group participants to determine change in knowledge on HPV and the HPV vaccine.



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## FORMATIVE RESEARCH:

- Initial focus groups and literature research exposed 5 predominant myths that we strived to address in the fotonovela:
  - Myth #1:** The vaccine is only for girls.  
**Solution:** The preteen boy in the fotonovela also gets vaccinated.
  - Myth #2:** Getting kids vaccinated against an STD will encourage premature sexual activity.  
**Solution:** Include a wise grandfather who advises his son that getting his kids vaccinated is the responsible thing to do; good kids have values and getting them vaccinated will not change that.
  - Myth #3:** People who've had sex can no longer get the HPV vaccine.  
**Solution:** Include information in the Q&A section of the fotonovela.
  - Myth#4:** Women who get the HPV vaccine no longer need Pap tests.  
**Solution:** Physician reminds parents that their daughter will still need to get regular Pap tests starting at age 21.
  - Myth #5:** The vaccine is not safe.  
**Solution:** Include a friendly physician who explains that millions have been vaccinated and information about side-effects in the Q&A section.

## RESULTS/LESSONS LEARNED

### Fine-tuning the fotonovela:

Final focus groups with Latina mothers of preteens brought to the surface other key issues/concerns outlined below that we addressed in the final version of the fotonovela:

- Concern:** Mothers felt that many men think that HPV is a woman's disease.  
**Solution:** Mothers suggested translating genital warts ("verrugas genitales") as genitals on the penis or vagina ("verrugas en el pene o la vagina").
- Concern:** Even though the didactic page was in bullet form, there was too much information to swift through.  
**Solution:** Break up didactic page in two pages (front/back covers) and make it a Q&A format.
- Concern:** For some participants it wasn't clear why the vaccine was offered at such an early age, and clearly did not understand that the vaccine prevented HPV but did not cure it.  
**Solution:** Change the conversation between two "comadres" to clarify that the vaccine prevents HPV and works best when given before the onset of sexual activity. This point was also emphasized in the Q&A section.
- Concern:** Getting adolescents vaccinated against HPV will warrant the STD/sex discussion.  
**Solution:** Stress the fact that adolescence is a great time to begin speaking to kids about family values and expectations in the Q&A section.
- Concern:** Cost of the vaccine is a barrier.  
**Solution:** Include more explicit information about the Vaccines for Children Program (VFC) in the didactic Q&A page.

## CONCLUSION

Fotonovelas are a staple fixture in Latino communities. Their dramatic storylines mimic Spanish-language "telenovelas." Familiarity with this medium provides a culturally-appropriate vehicle for delivering educational content, embedded in an approachable and entertaining format. Using guidance from the advisory committee, existing literature and focus groups with the target audience, we were able to ensure that the product was culturally and linguistically tailored for Latina mothers of preteens.

The pre- and post-test results revealed that all (100%) of the focus group participants increased their knowledge on (1) what does the HPV vaccine prevent, (2) the number of shots needed and (3) the availability of the vaccine for both boys and girls, after reading the fotonovela.

*The fotonovela has been distributed widely throughout Latino communities in California and is available at:*

[http://vacunasyimalud.org/wp-content/uploads/file/IMM-1049\\_fotonovela\\_web.pdf](http://vacunasyimalud.org/wp-content/uploads/file/IMM-1049_fotonovela_web.pdf)

*A webnovela version is also available at:*

<http://vacunasyimalud.org/mas-vale-prevenir-que-lamentar/>.

