



Health Protection Agency

Cheshire & Merseyside Health  
Protection Unit

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Our ref: SG/JM

29 September 2009

**To Directors of Public Health in Cheshire & Merseyside**

Dear Colleague

**Re: HPV vaccine incident**

You will have heard of the tragic news that a 14-year-old girl was taken ill at a school in Coventry shortly after receiving the HPV vaccine, and later died. A full and urgent investigation into the death is underway.

The HPV vaccine, Cervarix, has a strong safety record. Several million doses have been given around the world and more than 1.4 million in the UK. Very rarely you will expect someone to have a severe allergic reaction to a vaccine, just as with food or any medication. The estimated rate of such severe allergic reactions is 1 in 1 million vaccine doses. We do not know, at this stage, whether this was the cause of this girl's death but it would be one of the possible causes being investigated.

As a purely precautionary measure, stocks of Cervarix vaccine from the batch that the girl received have been removed from nationwide stocks until the results of the investigation are available. The Department of Health will inform doctors and nurses of the results of the batch testing as soon as they are known.

The Department of Health has advised that the HPV vaccination programme will continue. The Health Protection Agency supports this advice. Parents can get further information on Cervarix from their school nurse, GP or at [www.immunisation.nhs.uk](http://www.immunisation.nhs.uk).

We would be grateful if you could consider sharing this letter with all HPV vaccine providers and Head teachers of secondary schools.

Please find attached additional information which you may find useful to share with immunisers.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dr Samuel Ghebrehewet".

**Dr Samuel Ghebrehewet**  
Consultant in Communicable Disease Control  
Cheshire & Merseyside Health Protection Unit

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