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Contact: Carol McPhail, USA Health Marketing and Communications
cmcphail@health.southalabama.edu

GO Teal and White campaign to raise awareness about cervical cancer

MOBILE, Alabama (01/17/2023) -- Many women in Alabama postponed regular screenings for cervical cancer, especially during surges of COVID-19. As a result, more women could be diagnosed with cancer at later, more dangerous stages.

“COVID-19 has caused many women to miss pap tests or follow-ups to detect cervical pre-cancer and adolescents to miss HPV vaccinations that prevent cervical cancer and six other cancers in men and women,” said Jennifer Young Pierce, M.D., M.P.H., leader of Cancer Control and Prevention at the USA Health Mitchell Cancer Institute and a professor of gynecologic oncology at the Frederick P. Whiddon College of Medicine at the University of South Alabama. “The combination creates a perfect storm that threatens to erode 20 years of improvement in cervical cancer mortality.”

The urgent message is central to the statewide GO Teal and White campaign to raise awareness about preventing cervical cancer through HPV vaccination, cervical cancer screening and follow-up treatment for pre-cancers. The campaign is joined by several other organizations from across Alabama and will run throughout January, Cervical Cancer Awareness Month.

Pierce pointed out that HPV infection is responsible for 99 out of 100 cases of cervical cancer. “HPV vaccination is cancer prevention,” Pierce said. “The goal is to get the word out to prevent cervical cancer and save lives through vaccination, screening and follow up.”

Cervical cancer is most frequently diagnosed in women between the ages of 35 and 44. In 2022, an estimated 14,100 new cases of invasive cervical cancer were diagnosed in the United States, according to the American Cancer Society.

The campaign calls on businesses, nonprofits and supporters to spread the word about cervical cancer prevention by hanging GO Teal and White posters during the month of January and wearing teal and white on GO Teal and White Day, Friday, Jan. 20.

Joining the Mitchell Cancer Institute for the GO Teal and White campaign are partner organizations from across Alabama, including Alabama Public Health, the Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program of Alabama, the American Cancer Society, the Laura Crandall Brown Foundation, Human Rights Watch, the University of Alabama at Birmingham, St. Jude

Children's Research Hospital HPV Cancer Prevention Program, the Alabama Academy of Family Physicians, the Alabama Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, VAX 2 STOP CANCER and the Alabama Comprehensive Cancer Control Coalition.

The Mitchell Cancer Institute offers the following recommendations to prevent cervical cancer:

- **Get screened.** An HPV test is recommended starting at age 30 and can find cancer earlier. A pap test is recommended every three to five years for women ages 21 to 64.
- **Follow up** with your healthcare provider on any abnormal screening results to receive appropriate treatment. The treatment of pre-cancer prevents the cancer, not the pap itself.
- **Vaccinate boys and girls** against HPV, ideally between the ages of 9 and 12. The HPV vaccine is recommended for all adolescents and adults up to age 26 and up to age 45 based on risk factors for HPV-related illness or cancer.