

Health Awareness

Cervical Cancer Diagnosis Leads To Passion For Prevention

(NAPSA)—Thanks to one woman's passion for prevention, fewer women will be faced with the difficulties that she experienced when she learned of her cervical cancer.

At age 36, Paige Anderson heard words every woman dreads, "You have cervical cancer." Thanks to a gynecologic oncologist, Paige learned that there were options for managing her cancer. She learned that she could be managed with surgery rather than chemotherapy and radiation, as she was told by her first doctor. She realized how important it was to see an expert—a gynecologic oncologist—and she and her husband Mark decided to share what they had learned with others.

In addition, Paige realized that many women are reluctant to discuss their diagnosis of cervical cancer because it is caused by a sexually transmitted virus, the human papillomavirus—or HPV. She and Mark decided to openly discuss her cancer to help remove the stigma from it and to encourage discussion of all gynecologic cancers.

Open Dialogue Can Help Others

"A week after my diagnosis, a colleague who knew of my diagnosis realized she hadn't had her annual exam yet. She scheduled it and discovered she had precancerous cells," said Paige. "This convinced us that education and open dialogue could help others avoid my diagnosis."

Theirs is a powerful message because cervical cancer, unlike other female reproductive cancers, is preventable. Regular screening with a Pap test and other diagnostic tools can detect abnormal cell changes in the cervix before they turn into cancer. Despite the availability of screening, this year alone over 10,000 women are diagnosed with advanced cancer and almost 4,000 will die from this preventable cancer.



Cervical cancer survivor Paige Anderson and her husband Mark. Unlike other female reproductive cancers, cervical cancer is preventable.

And now there is a vaccine that can prevent 70 percent of cervical cancer cases. The vaccine is recommended for girls and young women, ages 9-26. The ideal time to be vaccinated is before sexual activity begins. Public health officials urge that women continue to have regular Pap tests even if they have been vaccinated, since the vaccine does not prevent all cervical cancer.

A Letter To 100 Women

In partnership with the Gynecologic Cancer Foundation (GCF), Paige continues her mission of education and awareness. A year after her diagnosis, she sent a personal letter to more than 100 women friends, family and colleagues to remind them to get their annual exams and to remind a friend. On the second anniversary of her diagnosis, she held a tea to raise awareness with almost 100 women attending.

Paige is still deciding what to do for her third anniversary, but she definitely plans to include information about the cervical cancer vaccine.

For more information about cervical cancer and GCF, visit www.cervicalcancercampaign.org and www.thegcf.org.