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MEDIA RELEASE

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TIME RUNNING OUT FOR FREE CERVICAL CANCER VACCINE

Northern Beaches women have limited time to commence their course of free cervical cancer vaccine and shouldn't be put off by incorrect information on the Federal Health Department's website.

"Young Northern Beaches women should act soon if they don't want to cop a \$450 fee for cervical cancer vaccine," said Brad Hazzard.

"Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) is a major cause of cervical cancer and without vaccinations, one woman in 227 will develop cervical cancer by the age of 75¹.

"Just over two years ago the Government introduced free vaccine for girls/women up to the age of 26 - but there is a deadline looming on the 30th of June.

"It is extremely concerning that almost half of young women² may miss out on the free vaccine.

"To top it off, there is confusion from website advice to General Practitioners which states (incorrectly) that:

'From July 2007 until June 2009, free HPV vaccine will be available through general practice and other immunisation providers for:

- *Females aged 12-18years who missed doses during the school-based programme;*
- *Females aged 18-26years, **however the full course of three doses must be completed before the end of June 2009**, with the first dose given before the woman reaches 27 years.³*

"The NSW Cancer Council makes it clear that the correct information for GP's is that as long as the first dose is given on or before the 30th of June – the course is free.

"Women on the Northern Beaches should access the vaccine and ensure as far as possible they do not become one of the 720 women each year diagnosed with cervical cancer in Australia⁴," Mr Hazzard said.

¹ NSW Cancer Council website

² "HPV vaccination catch up program research paper, Sydney Centre for Reproductive Health Research, Family Planning NSW, January 2009

³ Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing, The National HPV Vaccination Program

⁴ NSW Cancer Council website

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