Meeting Notes – Jan. 31, 2025

Two of our Rotary members, President Stephen Wheeler and President-elect Dori Harmon, recently attended an Operation WipeOut summit in Birmingham. Operation WipeOut is a program dedicated to eliminating cervical cancer as a public health threat here in Alabama. The LaFayette Rotary Club was privileged to partner with the Rotary Club of Birmingham and UAB, among others, to participate in this initiative. Below are some notes from this recent meeting, held January 31, 2025, from 10 am to 2 pm at the Harbert Center in downtown Birmingham). Thank you to George Miranda from the Russell Medical Center for taking such good notes!

On Jan. 31, 2025. It was the second such summit, where participants took stock of the first wave of accomplishments and began making plans for the second. About 160 to 170 people were in attendance from 33 counties.

Bruce Rogers, President of the Birmingham Rotary Club, welcomed us and gave a brief history of their club’s participation both in the fight to eradicate polio and in their support of WIPE OUT.

Dr. Scott Harris from the ADPH also spoke, as did Isabel Scarinci, the patron saint of cervical cancer patients and a Ph.D. epidemiologist at UAB.

[https://vimeo.com/moonshineagency/review/844453468/5d683b5e2c%20](https://vimeo.com/moonshineagency/review/844453468/5d683b5e2c%20%20) – video about ADPH/Alabama and Wipe Out Cervical Cancer (But I don’t think this is the same video we watched).

Dr. Warner Huh, a gynecological oncologist at UAB gave us a scientific rundown on cervical cancer. According to the CDC (2022), Alabama in #7 in incidence of cervical cancer and #3 in death from cervical cancer.

More than 50% of eligible women in Alabama are not screened or are under screened.

The Pap smear revolutionized cervical cancer care. Before the pap smear, the incidence of cervical cancer was twice that of breast cancer.

Black women are more likely to die of CC than white women: 3.5/10,000 blacks vs. 3.2/10,000 whites.

90% of cervical cancer is caused by HPV. 90% of HPV infections will clear up on their own. Almost every sexually active person will be infected by HPV at some point in their lives.

It is persistent exposure to HPV that triggers a cancer genesis. If a person is vaccinated before they become sexually active, they have virtually a zero chance of getting cervical cancer.

Vaccinate children at age 9-12. Takes two doses up until you are 14. Afterward, from 14 to 26 it takes 3 doses. Vaccination is indicated for up to 45 years of age, but really it works best when young and sexually inactive.

HPV-related cancers: vaginal, vulvar, anal, oropharyngeal, penile and cervical.

The vaccine is safe and effective (up to 100%) and covered 100% by insurance.

Screen at least every 3 years from age 21 to 65. HPV testing is more accurate than Pap smear. If you get a pap smear, ask for co-testing (pap + HPV).

FDA just approved a self-collection HPV test.

Screening is just the first step. You must have evaluation and treatment available. The Alabama Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program (ABCCEDP)

Cervical Cancer CAN be eradicated, with vaccination.

3 steps: (1) promote vaccination; (2) promote screening; (3) follow up with treatment.

Go to the Operation Wipeout website; look under Partners and look for RESOURCES

In Alabama, more than 50% of cervical cancer is diagnosed at late stage. Our rates of vaccination are below the national average.

ADPH has a training program for nurse practitioners to perform colposcopies.

30% of women diagnosed with cervical cancer will die from it. From a quality adjusted life perspective, cervical cancer screening with HPV testing is more cost effective than mammography.

We had breakout sessions after lunch where we got to know the folks at our table and what each of us can bring to the cause.

I was fortunate to sit at a table with the contingency from LaFayette, AL, where the pilot program was held, as well as a member of the Cancer Control staff at ADPH who lives in Alexander City (but works in Montgomery). I was also fortunate to meet Misty Price, who manages contracting with health providers for ABCCEDP; and Kelli Hardy, who is the ABCCEDP liaison with Alabama Medicaid.

[https://vicc.org/sites/default/files/drupalfiles/2024-08/4\_Scarinci\_presentation%20nashville.pdf](https://vicc.org/sites/default/files/drupalfiles/2024-08/4_Scarinci_presentation%20nashville.pdf%20) : Scarinci presentation to Vanderbilt

[https://vimeo.com/906078731?&login=true#\_=\_](https://vimeo.com/906078731?&login=true%23_=_%20) the CDC video we saw at the Summit