HPV and Oral Cancer

The need to integrate oral health practices into nursing education

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BACKGROUND: Human papillomavirus (HPV)-associated oropharyngeal cancer has increased in recent decades. With a shortage of dental professionals, nurses may be key in detecting oral cancer and educating patients.

OBJECTIVES: The aim of this study is to assess students in nursing and dental programs for their oral and oropharyngeal cancer knowledge and perceptions of responsibility and capability of performing oral screenings and HPV counseling.

METHODS: 158 surveys were completed by students attending nursing and dental programs at a midwestern university. The chi-squared test and analysis of variance were used to calculate differences in frequencies of categorical and interval data.

FINDINGS: Many students across programs were unaware of the potential effectiveness of the HPV vaccination in reducing oropharyngeal cancer. Nursing and nurse practitioner students were less likely to believe they could perform an examination or that it was within their perceived scope of practice.

Literature Review
Nursing and dental professions have long embraced cancer prevention as a cornerstone of their respective practice models using primary and secondary preventive measures, but the level of knowledge and training continues to vary widely (Meng, Duncan, Porter, Li, & Tomar, 2007; Yellowitz, Horowitz, Drury, & Goodman, 2000). The nursing profession has counseled and