Does HPV Cause Prostate Cancer?

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Human papillomavirus (HPV), a common sexually transmitted virus, and the cause of cervical cancer, is being investigated for its possible role in prostate cancer. James Lawson and Wendy Glenn at the University of New South Wales reviewed existing studies linking HPV to prostate cancer. This is important because HPV is the only virus identified in prostate cancer that can be prevented by vaccination.

The researchers found that HPV was more common in prostate cancers than normal prostate tissues. Specifically, they noted that HPV types more likely to cause cancer (high risk HPV) were more likely to be found in cancerous and pre-cancerous prostates than in normal samples. They also found that countries with high levels of cervical cancer also had high levels of prostate cancer.

Taken together, the evidence led the researchers to believe that sexually transmitted HPV may be a cause of prostate cancer. They suggest that HPV vaccination could be used to prevent prostate cancer. Additional studies will examine the link between HPV and prostate cancer and the biology of HPV infection in the prostate.

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