

Rep. Slaughter Commends Virologists in the Infectious Disease Division of URM

Speech of Hon. Louise McIntosh Slaughter of New York in the House of Representatives

June 21, 2006

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor three champions of medical research and health care innovation in this country, Doctors William Bonnez, Richard Reichman and Robert Rose, virologists in the Infectious Diseases Division of the Department of Medicine at the University of Rochester Medical Center (URMC).

The URM has a long legacy of medical innovation and groundbreaking research. These three doctors have continued that tradition with their research into the human papillomavirus (HPV), laying the groundwork for the recent FDA approval of a cervical cancer vaccine that will protect against two of the most prevalent cancer-causing strains of HPV.

After years of research and clinical trials during the 1990s, Doctors Bonnez, Reichman, and Rose were able to create a "virus-like particle" that imitated the real papillomavirus. Though it was not infectious, the virus-like particle induced the immune system to respond as if a real virus were launching an attack. This breakthrough at the UPMC, created the foundation for other scientists to build upon. The fruits of UPMC's basic research were reaped on June 8, 2006, when the Food and Drug Administration approved Gardasil, the vaccine designed to block strains of the sexually transmitted HPV known to cause 70 percent of cervical cancer cases.

Every year approximately 5.5 million people contract sexually transmitted HPV infections from their partners. In fact, three out of every four sexually active people will get an HPV infection at some point during their lifetime. In some age groups, such as sexually active men and women under the age of 30, it is estimated that 40 percent of people are currently infected. HPV causes about 9,700 new cases of cervical cancer in women annually. In addition, each year, cervical cancer kills nearly 4,000 women in the U.S. and more than 288,000 women worldwide. Through the work of Doctors Bonnez, Reichman, Rose and others, we will see these statistics drop dramatically in the years ahead, and millions of lives worldwide will be saved.

As a microbiologist I understand the critical importance of developing new vaccines to fight the diseases that plague our Nation and countries around the world. And when there are major medical breakthroughs, like the approval of Gardasil, we should celebrate the years of basic research that went into development of this life saving vaccine. That is why it gives me great pleasure to come before the House of Representatives to recognize and pay tribute to the tireless efforts made by three doctors--William Bonnez, Richard Reichman and Robert Rose--at UPMC.

To view the speech as printed in the Congressional Record [Click Here](#) .