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Vaccine for cancer-causing HPV found

BOSTON (AP) — Early testing shows an experimental vaccine to be 100 percent effective against the virus that causes cervical cancer, raising doctors' hopes of someday sending the lethal disease into retreat in the same way as smallpox and polio.

"It appears to be the real thing," said Dr. Christopher Crum, a pathologist at Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston. "You're looking at some very compelling evidence that this vaccine will prevent cervical cancer."

It remains unclear how long the protection might last. Even so, researchers say a vaccine could reach the market within five years or so.

The findings were published in Thursday's New England Journal of Medicine. The issue also carries separate research findings showing potential value in an experimental vaccine for genital herpes.

Vaccines work by teaching the body's immune defenses to

recognize invading viruses and bacteria. Most types of cancer, by contrast, are blamed largely on genetic mutations and environmental factors. However, virtually all cases of cervical cancer are caused by a sexually transmitted virus — the human papilloma virus.

A vaccine for cervical cancer is urgently being sought because the disease strikes about 450,000 women worldwide each year, killing about half. It is the leading cancer killer of women in the developing world. In the United States, where Pap tests are widely used for screening, it develops in about 15,000 women annually and kills about a third.

The new vaccine, aimed at the viral strain Type 16 responsible for about half the cases of cervical cancer, was tested on women ages 16 to 23 at 16 sites around the country in a study led by Merck & Co. and the University of Washington. Merck developed the vaccine and funded the research. The women were

HPV vaccine found

A new vaccine can protect against Type 16 of the human papilloma virus, a sexually transmitted virus that causes cervical cancer, a new study shows. An estimated 5.5 million people become infected with a strain of HPV each year in the United States.

Efficacy rate of vaccine vs placebo

HPV-16 vaccine	Placebo
Group size	Group size
Infection 0	Infection 41

NOTE: The study included 1,133 women with an average age of 22.

SOURCES: The New England Journal of Medicine, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

watched on average for almost a year and a half.

Rabbi could face death penalty for wife's murder

FREEHOLD, N.J. (AP) — A rabbi was convicted of murder Wednesday for hiring two men to beat his wife to death so he could carry on an affair with a woman he met while ministering to her dying husband. He could now face a death sentence.

The verdict against Rabbi Fred J. Neulander, 61, came nearly a year after his first trial for the 1994 death of Carol Neulander at their suburban Philadelphia home ended in a hung jury.

The rabbi stood expressionless as the verdict was read, while his wife's brother and sister wept in the courtroom gallery. Jurors took 27 hours to find Neulander guilty of capital murder, felony murder and murder conspiracy.

The sentencing phase of the trial begins Thursday.

Neulander, a founder of Cherry Hill's large Congregation M'kor Shalom, took the stand last year to deny any role in the slaying. He said he and his 52-year-old wife had an "open marriage" in which they agreed to see other people.

"I was selfish and arrogant. I went beyond the bounds of the marriage," Neulander testified then. "I betrayed Carol. I betrayed my family. I betrayed my synagogue. I betrayed my religion."

The rabbi did not testify this time. Relatives of the victim and prosecutor James P. Lynch said they would not discuss the case until the rabbi is sentenced.

"We're going to do all within our power to make sure that this defendant gets a fair trial," Lynch said.

The Neulanders were pillars of the community in Cherry Hill, a wealthy suburb of 70,000 east of Philadelphia. They founded Congregation M'kor Shalom together in 1974 and watched it grow to include nearly 1,000 families.

On Nov. 1, 1994, Carol Neulander was at an evening class, something he had started doing just two weeks earlier.

The door opened while she was talking to her daughter. Robert Neulander said she would call back. But within the hour, the rabbi arrived home to find his wife's body in a pool of blood, her head beaten in with a metal pipe.

Among the first on the scene was their son, Matthew Neulander, an emergency medical technician whose ambulance crew responded to the 911 call. Co-workers kept him outside.

In a police interview a few hours after the slaying, Neulander denied any knowledge of the killing and also said he never had an extramarital affair.

"Everything was kosher," Neulander said about his relationship with his wife.

But Neulander later resigned as senior rabbi, citing unspecified moral indiscretions, and he was charged in 1998 with arranging the slaying.

"I was selfish and arrogant. I went beyond the bounds of the marriage. I betrayed Carol. I betrayed my family. I betrayed my synagogue. I betrayed my religion"

—Rabbi Fred J. Neulander convicted murderer



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