

Oral cancer epidemic in men caused by HPV, immune system gone 'awry'

[S]cientists have made headway in figuring out why HPV, the human papillomavirus, has this glaring gender bias. Men are four times more likely than women to be diagnosed with oral cancer.

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[R]esearch increasingly shows the real problem is something men have practically no control over: their immune response.

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In women, an HPV infection usually sets off the body's defense mechanisms. The immune system makes antibodies that kill off the invader, then immune cells remain on guard, ready to attack if the virus reappears. But in men, something goes awry. The HIM study — for HPV in Men — documented this.

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Among 384 men who developed infections during a 24-month period, only 8 percent produced antibodies. But this response rate varied depending on the site of infection; none of the small number of orally infected men produced antibodies.

Rather than putting the immune system on guard and protecting men from the virus, infection sharply increased the chance of getting infected again with the exact same HPV type. And many men who got reinfected were celibate at the time.

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Anna R. Giuliano, the researcher at the Moffitt Cancer Center in Tampa, Fla., who led the HIM study, said recurring infections may be due to reactivation of dormant virus, or to auto-inoculation — the man spreads infection from one part of his body to another.

Read full, original post: [HPV is causing an oral cancer epidemic in men by outwitting natural defenses](#)