

Vaccine to fight cervical cancer

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March 22: A vaccine to fight cervical cancer has hit the drug counters all over the country. "This vaccine, similar to polio and tetanus vaccines, is capable of taming cervical cancer which kills more than 75,000 women in India annually," Prof Peter Stern, head, Paterson Institute for Cancer research, Manchester, UK, told *Deccan Chronicle*.

According to Prof Stern, India should go for a massive vaccination programme to check this disease. Dr Shailesh Mehta, director, Glaxo Smith Kline Vaccines, said the vaccine was priced at Rs 3,000.

Every year more than 1.3 lakh women are diagnosed with cervical cancer in the country. "It is the most common cancer found among Indian women in the 15-44 age group. One out of four women who die due to cervical cancer in the world is an Indian," said Prof Stern.

Cervical cancer is caused by a certain virus known as Human Papilloma Virus (HPV), which is quite com-



Prof Peter Stern

mon and easily transmitted from skin-to-skin contact in the genital area. "The principal transmission of this disease is through sex. It is a sexually transmitted disease but which can be acquired even without full sexual intercourse," said Prof Stern. He said *Cervarix*, the new vaccine, was capable of controlling and checking cervical cancer. "If it is administered to girls on reaching puberty or before they start having sex, the disease can be prevented effectively," he added.

"Though we do not claim that this is a fool-proof mechanism, it will work against the most potent toxins that cause cervical cancer," said Prof Stern.