College Students Who Feel 'invincible' Unlikely To Accept Vaccines, MU Researcher Finds

(31 Jul 2009) Vaccines to protect against sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV and herpes, are being developed and may soon be available to college students. However, limited research has been conducted to determine if students will accept the vaccines once they are available. In a new study, a University of Missouri researcher has found that students who feel invulnerable, or invincible, to physical harm are unlikely to get an HIV vaccine. Alternately, students who feel invulnerable to psychological harm are more likely to get the vaccine.

"Previous researchers have used invulnerability measures to predict health-endangering behaviors in students, but this study is unique in that it considers the role of invulnerability in students' health-protective or preventative behaviors," said Russell Ravert, assistant professor in the MU College of Human Environmental Sciences.

In the study, Ravert measured two invulnerability factors: danger and psychological. Students with increased danger invulnerability, those who viewed themselves as physically invincible, were more likely to decline the vaccine. One explanation is that strong feelings of danger invulnerability may be associated with decreased threat, which can diminish protective behaviors, Ravert said.

Students who felt psychological invulnerability, those who didn't care what others thought, were more likely to accept a vaccine. Students' psychological invulnerability may protect against the possible stigma associated with getting vaccinated for HIV, or other sexually transmitted diseases, Ravert said.

"It is important to determine what factors are associated with vaccine acceptance because not all students will be willing to take vaccines," Ravert said. "Efforts to promote vaccines should consider that students who aren't worried about being harmed are less likely to get the vaccine, even when it's warranted by their sexual behavior."

In the study, the strongest predictor of vaccine acceptance was students' perceived susceptibility to contracting HIV, followed by their number of sexual partners. Students' decisions also were influenced by the cost of the vaccine.

In future studies, Ravert will examine college students' invulnerability beliefs as they relate to risk-taking behaviors and other preventative health behaviors, as well as how invulnerability beliefs vary across age groups. The study, "College Student Invulnerability Beliefs and HIV Vaccine Acceptability," was based on Ravert's dissertation data from Indiana University. It was published in the July/August issue of the American Journal of Health Behavior.

Source: Emily Ann Smith University of Missouri-Columbia

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COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

International students sponsor fundraiser for near-drowning victim

By Keertana Sastry
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COLUMBIA — Over a month after MU graduate student Virui Wei nearly drowned in the Tara Apartments pool, friends and family have begun efforts to help pay for the expensive rehabilitation she will need.

The Friendship Association of Chinese Students and Scholars at MU has set up an account at Boone County National Bank for donations to help pay for Wei’s medical treatment. Every MU graduate student is required to have student insurance, and Wei’s has already reached the $250,000 limit.

Wei, 22, was found at the bottom of the Tara Apartments pool on June 25, and has been in the intensive care unit — in and out of critical condition — since that day. Bystanders at the pool said she was under water for about five minutes, according to previous Missourian reports. About 10 days ago, Wei started to improve. She was taken off a ventilator and has since been able to breathe on her own. But because she was deprived of oxygen during the accident, her brain and lungs sustained harsh injuries.

Lesa Beamer, Wei’s friend and thesis adviser in the biochemistry department, has visited Wei nearly every day at University Hospital and said that even with the severity of the accident, Wei is starting to regain several brain functions.

"Whatever parts of her brain that were injured are rewiring pretty quickly," Beamer said. "The doctors tell me that this happens with young people."

According to University Hospital, Wei is now considered to be in fair condition. She has regained consciousness; her indicators are favorable; and her vital signs are stable and within normal limits.
Beamer said in the past few days, Wei has been able to open her eyes, smile at people, recognize her friends when they visit and, recently, wave at familiar faces.

"I think it was Monday when she waved to me for the first time," Beamer said. "It warms my heart every time I see her take the next step to recovery."

Even with the progress Wei has been making, Beamer is still distraught over the accident. She said that after talking to international students from MU, she found that many of them don't know how to swim.

"It was just an accident, it could have happened to any of us," Beamer said. "The real tragedy was that no one could help her that was there at the time, and I'm sure nobody feels worse about it than they do."

Beamer signed onto the fundraiser on July 24 after she realized that a lack of funds would possibly keep Wei out of rehabilitation. Since then, Beamer has taken on the role of alerting the media about Wei's situation and informing people how to help out.

"It's been a group effort with the students and faculty and many other kids that knew her," Beamer said. "We've only just realized the magnitude of what we have to do in the last couple of days."

Wei is considered to be an excellent candidate for rehabilitation, Beamer said, and the process will include regaining both physical and mental abilities. She said Wei will receive "physical therapy to walk and generally regain strength/dexterity/endurance since she's been in bed so long." Because of her tracheotomy operation, Wei will need speech therapy and help learning how to swallow food.

Beamer says she is hopeful for Wei's recovery and continues to implore people to donate money toward treatment.

"It's an incredible thing to see the pace of progress she's going through," Beamer said. "She's convinced me that she'll get better. I wasn't so sure for a while, I have to admit, but she's convinced me. Not everyone believes it yet, but they will."

To donate money for Wei's recovery, contact any Boone County National Bank in Columbia, Joey Clemons, who the contact person of the fund at Boone County National Bank, or Fei Gao, president of Friendship Association of Chinese Students and Scholars.
Best back-to-school laptops

Find the right computer for your collegian.

By Rik Fairlie, Money Magazine
July 31, 2009

(Money Magazine) -- If your kid is heading to college this fall, you may be feeling pretty protective of your wallet. But equipping your offspring with one of the cut-rate laptops in those back-to-school fliers is a false economy.

"You can't expect a $500 laptop to last four years," says Yancy Phillips, director of IT user services at Indiana State University.

For a model that goes the distance, Phillips says, expect to spend around $1,000. Take this Laptop Shopping 101 course to find the right notebook for your collegian. Mom and Dad, you may want one for yourself too.

What to buy

See what the school suggests. Most universities publish minimum hardware recommendations on their websites, says Kenneth Green of the Campus Computing Project, a research organization. Some name specific models that work well on the network and that IT people are trained to support. Needs may differ by major, so have your kid check with his department.

Think beyond freshman year. The configurations colleges suggest are normally meant to see students through four years of school. Thus they generally include an Intel Core 2 Duo processor, 2GB of RAM, and a 160GB hard drive. Skimping now could cost you another laptop later.

Buy from our picks ... if the college doesn’t specify models. They're good values and meet most schools' standards. Just be sure to get the specs listed.

Where to buy

Campus store (if the school has one). On-campus computer stores typically yield good values - 10% to 20% under retail - thanks to bulk purchasing, says Kevin Bailey, an IT director for University of Missouri at Columbia. But what really puts them ahead of, say, Best Buy: Campus stores offer onsite support and repairs.
Online (if the college has no store). Because you’re looking for specific specs, it pays to buy direct. Most colleges that don’t have campus computer stores do have online discounts with major manufacturers. Check those links. But also visit the small-biz sections of the makers’ sites, where models are sometimes cheaper.

Warranty: Why you should get one

Most extended warranties aren’t worth the cost. But in this case consider the user, who’ll tote the notebook everywhere and use it as a beer coaster. Buy three years of coverage, plus damage protection, from the maker.

"If it breaks after that, you’ll want to replace it with more current technology," says Allen Gwinn, IT director at Southern Methodist University's Cox School of Business.

Tip: In 2009 and 2010 you can pay for a computer from 529 college-savings-plan funds even if the computer isn't required, says Mark Kantrowitz of FinAid.org.

Shopping for a high schooler?

High schools generally don't recommend specific computer models. So what should you buy when your kid comes begging?

The functions most teens use - word processing, web browsing, e-mail - don't require a very powerful computer, says Ann Flynn, director of education technology for the National School Boards Association. So consider a netbook, one of those mini-laptops that often weigh three pounds or less and cost as little as $200, she suggests. Bonus: With such low price points, there's no reason to buy an extended warranty. (Besides, your teen will need a more powerful system by college anyway.)

Best bet: Asus EEEPC 1000HE; $399. It's rated for 9 hours of battery life, it has a solid chassis and a comfortable keyboard, and it is faster than many of its peers. ■