Almost every case of cervical cancer could be prevented by programmes that combine cervical screening with vaccination against the Human Papilloma Virus (HPV). However, many women in Europe do not have access to these programs because governments have not understood their importance and therefore not prioritised their implementation. In addition, even where cervical screening and HPV vaccination are available, many people do not use them because they have not been made aware of the health benefits they will provide.

Raising awareness about cervical screening and HPV vaccination is therefore essential to reducing cervical cancer rates in Europe. The ECCA was launched in 2002 to run an education and advocacy campaign to raise awareness of cervical cancer and how it can be prevented. The Pearl of Wisdom is a key element in this campaign because it improves our ability to communicate with our audiences.

The successful communication of health information is influenced by many factors. One of the most important is that people must learn to trust the campaign or they will simply ignore the messages. Trust can only be developed over time but the process clearly cannot start unless the public can easily recognise the campaign. The main purpose of a campaign symbol is to help people to recognise the campaign among all the other things that are competing for their attention.
An excellent example of a successful campaign symbol is the pink ribbon. The pink ribbon is recognised around the world as the symbol of the Breast Cancer Campaign and it is trusted by the vast majority of people. However, the Breast Cancer Campaign is not one single organisation. Instead, it is a collection of thousands of groups that have all chosen to use the pink ribbon just because the public recognition and trust it provides helps them to achieve their goals. Now we need the same thing for the Cervical Cancer Campaign.

The teal ribbon has been proposed as a symbol for the Cervical Cancer Campaign. However, the teal ribbon has already been claimed by 19 other campaigns and there is also the potential for confusion with the emerald, green, jade, light green, lime green, mint green and turquoise ribbons. This makes a total of 89 campaigns that are already trying to claim green coloured ribbons as their own ‘unique’ symbol and creating widespread recognition of the teal ribbon as the symbol for the Cervical Cancer Campaign will be almost impossible. For a campaign symbol to work, people who see it must immediately think “Cervical Cancer Campaign” and not “Hmmm… now which campaign it that?”

The Pearl of Wisdom was created as a unique symbol for the Cervical Cancer Campaign specifically to avoid confusion with other campaign symbols. In addition, the Pearl of Wisdom symbol has been trade-marked globally to ensure it cannot be used by other campaigns and remains a symbol that is clearly and specifically associated with the Cervical Cancer Campaign.

Recognition of the Pearl of Wisdom as the symbol of the Cervical Cancer Campaign has steadily increased since its launch during the Cervical Cancer Prevention Week in January 2008. To date, over 1 million Pearl of Wisdom brooches have been distributed, there have been many thousands of articles in the media about it and a number of countries and organisations have endorsed the Pearl of Wisdom as the official symbol of the Cervical Cancer Campaign. As such, we have made excellent progress in achieving recognition of the Pearl of Wisdom and started to build the trust that is essential to the overall success of the campaign.