

Calls-to-action – Prioritisation of Vaccine Preventable Respiratory Diseases – 2022

PP-UNP-GLB-1108 – June 2023

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Background

During 2022, through an advisory panel forum, Pfizer brought together experts in adult vaccination from across Europe to discuss the Prioritisation of Vaccine Preventable Respiratory Diseases.

During the sessions, members of the advisory panel discussed the opportunities and challenges to elevate adult vaccination, beyond COVID-19 and influenza, to other adult vaccines such as pneumococcal, with a particular focus on how best to support health system sustainability and resilience ahead of Winter 2022/23.

As stated by WHO Director-General Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus¹ in May 2020 at the outset of the pandemic, *“Prevention is not only better than cure, it’s cheaper, and the smartest thing to do.”*² This is self-evident in the provision of adult immunisation, with maximising uptake of existing vaccines for certain respiratory diseases helping to mitigate the annual burden of disease.³

The current global pandemic has made clear that vulnerable adults are at increased risk of serious infectious respiratory diseases and reinforced the need to use all available resources to help reduce this risk. This is important not just for individual health but also to protect the capacity of overburdened health systems as well as continuing to highlight the value of prevention.

As well as helping prevent illness and deaths⁴, investing in immunisation programmes against vaccine-preventable disease can help alleviate health system pressures through a reduction in admissions to primary and secondary care, helping to provide greater system resilience against future outbreaks.⁵

A greater focus is also required on education of health care professionals (HCPs) and patient populations on the importance of protection from vaccine-preventable respiratory diseases and increasing uptake of vaccines in order for the full health and societal benefits of vaccination to be realised.

The advisory panel concluded that now is the time to:

- Prioritise preventative healthcare
- Develop comprehensive adult vaccination schedules
- Develop robust adult vaccination campaigns
- Invest in vaccination infrastructure
- Recognise long-term impact of infectious respiratory diseases
- Enhance adult vaccination communications to improve confidence

Advisory Panel Membership

The Advisory Panel Series was chaired by **Dr Jane Barratt** (Secretary General, International Federation on Ageing) and brought together the following experts:

- **David Sinclair** (UK) - Chief Executive, International Longevity Centre UK
- **Prof Antoni Torres** (Spain) - Professor of Medicine (Pulmonology) and Senior Consultant of the Respiratory and Intensive Care Unit, Hospital Clínic de Barcelona
- **Prof Pier Luigi Lopalco** (Italy) - Full Professor of Hygiene and Preventive Medicine, University of Salento, formerly with ECDC
- **Mélanie Gallant Dewavrin** (France) - Director, HTaPFrance
- **Dr Paul Loubet** (France) - Infectologist, CHU Nîmes

Calls-to-action

Building on advances for COVID-19 vaccination, there is a need to harness the full value of immunisation for individuals, societies and health systems.

We call on Governments to prioritise immunisation programmes across the life course for all vaccine-preventable respiratory diseases to help to ensure protection of those at-risk and prevent associated burden to healthcare systems.

On the expert advice of the advisory panel, Pfizer makes the following recommendations.

As part of pandemic recovery measures, and to embed vaccination best practice from the pandemic, countries should:

- 1. Prioritise preventative healthcare:** Adult immunisation is part of an investment in healthy ageing that has significant social and economic benefits across all ages.⁶ To realise these benefits, it is crucial that Governments develop and implement strong national immunisation plans across the life course, as recognised by the WHO Immunization Agenda 2030 (IA2030).⁷
- 2. Develop comprehensive adult vaccination schedules:** As part of national immunisation strategies, Governments should consider the merits of implementing a comprehensive adult vaccination schedule against infectious respiratory diseases. Other good practice strategies to drive uptake include a reminder system notifying individuals on their birthdays about their vaccination status and eligibility. As part of an adult vaccination schedule, there should be an expansion of the qualified HCPs permitted to administer vaccination.
- 3. Develop robust adult vaccination campaigns:** Greater attention should be given to developing effective adult vaccination campaigns. Prioritisation should be afforded to improving awareness of adult respiratory vaccination amongst at-risk groups and the wider public and campaigns should include methods to build vaccine confidence.
- 4. Invest in vaccination infrastructure:** This should include expanding the role of community pharmacy to administer all recommended adult vaccines. In addition, investment in data collection should be prioritised, such as electronic immunisation records and real time data for monitoring uptake. This call-to-action is against the backdrop of poor data coverage for vaccine-preventable respiratory diseases such as pneumococcal pneumonia.⁸
- 5. Recognise long-term impact of respiratory diseases:** Whilst Governments are increasingly concerned about impact of Long COVID, awareness of the longer-term consequences of pneumonia and other infectious respiratory diseases is low. Governments should prioritise efforts to ensure the long-term impact of all respiratory diseases are sufficiently understood and appropriate mitigations are implemented including funding vaccines and awareness campaigns.
- 6. Enhance adult vaccination communications to improve confidence:** Governments should ensure vaccine communications are clear, targeted and evidence based. Vaccination communications campaigns should work closely with medical societies and patient organisations to establish key messages on adult vaccination to enhance confidence whilst also ensuring messages can be tailored for at-risk patients.

Signatures

Dr Jane Barratt

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References

¹ WHO. Biography – Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus. <https://www.who.int/director-general/biography>. Accessed May 2022.

² WHO (2020). WHO Director-General's opening remarks at the media briefing on COVID-19 - 6 May 2020. <https://www.who.int/director-general/speeches/detail/who-director-general-s-opening-remarks-at-the-media-briefing-on-covid-19--6-may-2020> Accessed November 2022.

³ Preaud E et al. Annual public health and economic benefits of seasonal influenza vaccination: a European estimate. *BMC Public Health*, [2014]; 14(813). Accessed November 2022.

⁴ Rodrigues, C. M. C., & Plotkin, S. A. (2020). Impact of Vaccines; Health, Economic and Social Perspectives. *Frontiers in microbiology*, 11, 1526. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fmicb.2020.01526>. Accessed June 2023.

⁵ Shet, A., Carr, K., Danovaro-Holliday, M. C., Sodha, S. V., Prospero, C., Wunderlich, J., ... & Lindstrand, A.. Impact of the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic on routine immunisation services: evidence of disruption and recovery from 170 countries and territories. *The Lancet Global Health*. 2022;10(2):e186-e194.

⁶ SAATI Partnership (2013). Adult vaccination – a key component of healthy ageing. https://ilcuk.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Adult-vaccination_a-key-component-of-health-ageing.pdf Accessed November 2022.

⁷ WHO. Implementing the Immunization Agenda 2030: A Framework for Action through Coordinated Planning, Monitoring & Evaluation, Ownership & Accountability, and Communications & Advocacy. https://cdn.who.int/media/docs/default-source/immunization/strategy/ia2030/ia2030_frameworkforactionv04.pdf?sfvrsn=e5374082_1&download=true. 2021; Accessed November 2022.

⁸ International Longevity Centre UK (2022). Moving the margins: Improving adult pneumococcal vaccine uptake in marginalised groups. <https://ilcuk.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/ILC-Moving-the-margins.pdf>. Accessed January 2023.