

# Statement of Action – Supporting a life course approach within National Immunization Technical Advisory Groups (NITAGs)

International Federation on Ageing  
and European Geriatric Medicine  
Society

January 2025

## Introduction

The global population is ageing rapidly, with 15% expected to be 60 or older by 2025 and over 22% by 2050. <sup>(1)</sup> Vaccination is a crucial public health intervention, preventing millions of deaths annually from vaccine-preventable diseases (VPDs). <sup>(2)</sup> Older adults are particularly vulnerable to VPDs due to weakened immune systems and the prevalence of chronic conditions. Despite the benefits of vaccination in later life, vaccine uptake remains low amongst older adults. There are a number of contributing factors which may explain the sub-par uptake rates, including but not limited to lack of inclusion of older adults within national immunization plans and programs, lack of infrastructure and pathways to deliver vaccination to older adults, lack of data on vaccination coverage, uptake and broader burden of disease of VPDs in older adults, and lack of education and awareness amongst older adults on VPDs and the need for vaccination.

The creation of robust vaccination policy is an important first-step in ensuring vaccine uptake amongst older adults as a means of promoting healthy ageing. Governments develop vaccine-related policy which is informed by advisory bodies including National Immunization Technical Advisory Groups (NITAGs) as part of an overall public health strategy and actions to protect and enhance population health, health care systems and in turn the country's social and economic productivity.

A [study](#) conducted by the International Federation on Ageing (IFA) of NITAGs in 34 countries revealed limited expertise in ageing and adult immunization, as well as insufficient transparency in NITAG processes. Recommendations from the study urge governments to enhance NITAG expertise on older adult vaccination, improve transparency, and ensure NITAGs' autonomy in decision-making.

To drive policy change, the involvement of geriatricians, civil society, and patient representatives is essential in advancing adult vaccination efforts and ensuring equitable, evidence-based vaccine decisions for older adults. To this end, there is a need to bring together geriatric professionals to support shared dialogue and action to advance adult immunization policy and specifically ensure a life course approach amongst NITAGs. Accordingly, IFA and the European Geriatric Medicine Society (EuGMS) united to develop key recommendations and actions to improve vaccination policy and practice for older adults, ultimately supporting healthy ageing and maintenance of function into later life.

## Statement of Action

IFA and EuGMS call for the following recommendations targeted across stakeholders, including geriatric professionals, government, advisory bodies, industry and civil society, to improve vaccination policy, programs and uptake amongst older adults:

### **1. Strengthen NITAG operations and expertise**

NITAGs must include diverse experts, especially public health and geriatric professionals, and general practitioners and primary care health care providers, as stakeholders of NITAGS to strengthen a life course approach to vaccination and reflect a more comprehensive perspective on population health needs, specifically with regards to prioritization of vaccination for older adults.

Accordingly, real-world cost-effectiveness data that measures broader health outcomes, such as the impact of VPDs on frailty, muscle mass and overall function, must be developed, utilized and included in decision-making processes to inform adult vaccination policy decisions effectively.

### **2. Invest in robust data collection**

NITAGs and policy makers require accurate, comprehensive and appropriate evidence to evaluate an increasing number of vaccines and prioritize vaccines based on burden of disease, public health impact and cost-effectiveness. Geriatric professionals and civil society must advocate for research that includes older adults, especially those with frailty or comorbidities, in vaccine clinical trials to ensure vaccine effectiveness is well understood in this population. Researchers, industry and public health bodies should be encouraged and called to action to conduct real-world randomized clinical trials to gather accurate and appropriate data to inform public health decision-making.

Additionally, there is a need to collect comprehensive data on vaccination coverage and uptake in older adults, which is crucial for implementing and assessing the effectiveness of immunization programs.

### **3. Support access and education on vaccination to enhance uptake in older adults**

Adult vaccination programs have been proven to return 19 times their original investment and have clear benefits for individuals, communities, health and social systems and economies.<sup>(3)</sup> It is clear that governments should invest in vaccination programs to support the health of populations. Geriatric professionals and civil society should advocate for sustainable funding and access pathways as part of national immunization programs, ensuring that recommended vaccines are accessible, affordable and available for all older adults to maximize the benefits of these programs.

Additionally, there is a need to support education and awareness targeted to older adults and their families on vaccination and training of health care providers, given they are key influencers in sharing information to older adults on vaccination.

#### **4. Ensure stakeholder engagement and accountability**

National immunization programs rarely include goals, targets, or mechanisms to evaluate vaccine coverage and uptake. There is a need to better plan and develop strategies for the implementation of vaccine programs, including diverse stakeholders, to drive the uptake of national immunization policies. There is a need to engage with health care providers, public health experts, policymakers, and community organizations to ensure all aspects of immunization pathways are supported and monitored for long-term success.

#### **Conclusion**

As the global population ages, vaccination for older adults is essential to protect against VPDs that particularly impact this group. However, low vaccination rates persist due to gaps in infrastructure, data, awareness, and policies. Addressing these issues requires stronger advisory bodies, better data collection, improved access, and targeted education. Collaborations, such as those between geriatric professionals, civil society and government, are vital, bringing together stakeholders to prioritize adult immunization policies that support healthy ageing.

## Acknowledgements

IFA would like to thank the following experts who informed the development of this statement, in addition to the support provided by Sanofi Global for this initiative.

Prof. Mirko Petrovic	Senior Full Professor of Geriatrics and Clinical Pharmacology at Ghent University, President of EuGMS
Prof. Stefania Maggi	Research Director at the CNR Aging Branch-Institute, Past-President of EuGMS, Vice-President of the European Interdisciplinary Council on Aging (EICA)
Prof. Cornel Christian Sieber	Chair for Internal Medicine-Geriatrics and Director of the Institute of Biomedicine of Ageing (IBA) at the Friedrich-Alexander University Erlangen-Nürnberg, Past-President of EuGMS
Prof. Nathalie van der Velde	Professor and Consultant in Geriatrics at Amsterdam UMC, Academic Director EuGMS
Prof. Graziano Onder	Director of the Department of Cardiovascular, Endocrine-metabolic Diseases and Aging at the Italian National Institute of Health, Research Director EuGMS
Prof. Gaetan Gavazzi	Professor in Geriatric Medicine at Centre Hospitalier Universitaire de Grenoble, Lead of EuGMS Special Interest Group on Vaccines and Infectious Diseases
Prof. Johan Flamaing	Professor at the Faculty of Medicine at KU Leuven, Lead of EuGMS Special Interest Group on Vaccines and Infectious Diseases

## References

1. World Health Organization. Ageing and health [Internet]. 2022 [cited 2023 Aug 17]. Available from: <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/ageing-and-health>
2. World Health Organization. Immunization [Internet]. 2019 [cited 2023 Aug 17]. Available from: <https://www.who.int/news-room/facts-in-pictures/detail/immunization>
3. El Banhawi H, Chowdhury S, Neri M, Radu P, Besley S, Bell E, et al. Socio-Economic Value of Adult Immunisation Programmes [Internet]. 2024 [cited 2024 Jun 6]. Available from: <https://www.ohe.org/publications/the-socio-economic-value-of-adult-immunisation-programmes/>

International Federation on Ageing  
1 Bridgepoint Drive, Suite G.238  
Toronto, ON, M4M 2B5, Canada

[www.vaccines4life.com](http://www.vaccines4life.com)

Published January 2025 © Vaccines4Life

