

MEETING SUMMARY

Uniting Civil Society Organizations and Health Care Professionals to Advance Adult Immunization Advocacy

IFA Side-Event at 21st EuGMS Congress

Meeting Overview

Infectious diseases continue to place considerable pressure on health systems, economies, and societies, contributing to increased healthcare demand, productivity losses, and broader social and economic strain.¹ In the context of a rapidly ageing global population, improving vaccination uptake across adulthood is an important component of maintaining population health and supporting sustainable health systems.

Vaccination is a foundation of healthy ageing and longevity, supporting functional ability, independence, and participation across the life course.^(2,3) As populations age and working lives extend, gaps in adult immunization increase vulnerability to vaccine-preventable diseases, leading to avoidable illness, lost productivity, and growing pressure on health and social systems. These impacts extend beyond individuals and families, affecting workforce stability, public finances, and broader societal resilience.

Despite this, adult immunization remains under-prioritized. Investment in vaccination programs has not kept pace with demographic change or the availability of newer vaccines designed to better protect older adults. The broader role of immunization, supporting NCD management, preventing or delaying frailty, and maintaining function, is also not consistently reflected in policy and practice.

To address these gaps, the International Federation on Ageing (IFA) leveraged the European Geriatric Medicine Society (EuGMS) 2025 Annual Congress to convene healthcare professionals (HCPs), civil society organizations (CSOs), and patient groups in a joint dialogue. This engagement aimed to strengthen collaboration, share perspectives on barriers to adult immunization, and identify aligned opportunities to advance policy and advocacy, particularly through a life-course approach and greater inclusion of civil society and diverse HCP voices in decision-making processes, including within National Immunization Technical Advisory Groups (NITAGs).

Discussions reinforced key action areas from previous engagement, including the need to strengthen NITAG capacity and ensure diverse expertise is reflected in decision-making, supported by more robust and inclusive data capturing the broader health and functional impacts of vaccination in older populations.⁴ Meeting outcomes also highlighted the importance of meaningful collaboration between HCPs, civil society organizations, and patient groups, supported by knowledge sharing and aligned advocacy efforts. Ensuring the active representation of older adults and individuals living with chronic conditions, and their HCPs, in the development and implementation of immunization policies and programs is critical to strengthening advocacy, reflecting lived experience, and advancing more equitable, person-centred immunization strategies.

Commitment to Action

Building on the outcomes of this meeting, participants emphasized the need for sustained collaboration to address persistent barriers to adult immunization and to advance coordinated, evidence-informed advocacy, with attention to the following actions:

- Strengthening information-sharing, enhancing mechanisms for collaboration, and working across sectors to overcome policy and practice barriers, while aligning advocacy efforts at multiple levels of influence.
- Targeting key actors, such as civil society, a range of HCPs, policymakers and health care decision-makers to understand and address barriers to adult immunization.
- Promoting a broader understanding of the value of immunization beyond infection prevention, including its role in mitigating the impact of vaccine-preventable diseases (VPDs) on frailty and functional decline, exacerbation of noncommunicable diseases, and its contribution to quality of life and independence.

The International Federation on Ageing (IFA) reaffirms its commitment to strengthening collaboration across HCPs, civil society, and patient groups to advance adult immunization policy and uptake. Through continued engagement, IFA, in collaboration with its partners, will support efforts to strengthen coordination, amplify advocacy, and advance policies that improve equitable access to immunization for older adults and populations at increased risk.

References

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