

Press Release - *Suboptimal pneumococcal adult vaccination rates in Canadian long-term care settings need improvement with targeted policy actions*

27 April 2023, Toronto, ON – The International Federation on Ageing (IFA) is proud to release findings from a recent study entitled *Driving the Agenda of Pneumococcal Pneumonia Vaccination in At-risk Populations in Community and Long-term Care*. The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the brutal nature and impact of respiratory infections on people of all ages and particularly amongst those at-risk of serious complications, such as older adults in long-term care (LTC) settings. Though several respiratory infections and other vaccine-preventable diseases (VPDs) can be prevented, or their severe symptoms reduced through receiving vaccines, current vaccination uptake rates for pneumococcal disease among older adults in LTC are below national targets.

This study conducted by the IFA looked at the status of existing public health policies and campaigns on pneumococcal disease in Canadian LTC settings and investigated the policy gaps that have resulted in poor vaccine uptake. One of the main findings from this study is that within LTC settings in Canada, vaccination policies for pneumococcal disease are inconsistent, absent, or vague across all provinces and territories and that even when they are available, they are not always accessible. This study also finds that public health communication on pneumococcal vaccination of older adults in LTC settings is ineffective, as evident in the lack of awareness from long-term care providers and associations, older adults, and the public.

Recommendations from this study call for a more comprehensive set of policies that prevent older people in these settings from becoming susceptible to VPDs like pneumococcal disease. The following recommendations have been developed with the intention of incorporating intersecting disciplines and sectors to collaborate on and influence upstream policy actions.

The first set of recommendations call on the Government of Canada (Public Health Agency of Canada) to: consider residents in LTC settings as a special population group of older adults, to include a recommendation in the overarching federal immunization strategy based on advice and direction from the National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI), and to lead a dialogue with provinces and territories on pneumococcal pneumonia vaccine recommendations for residents in LTC settings. The second set of recommendations call on community and LTC providers to: improve awareness of the value of pneumococcal vaccination as part of the health and wellbeing of residents in LTC settings, review and where appropriate revise policies that reflect the position of the associations of LTC providers on routine immunization, and help influence and shape policy (local, provincial, territorial and federal levels) on routine immunization including against pneumococcal disease as a mechanism to protect the right to health of residents of LTC settings.

“The findings and recommendations in this report not only help address existing gaps for pneumococcal vaccination policy but also inform the much-needed development of effective vaccination policies for long-term care settings”, says Mitali Mistry, Policy and Project Coordinator at IFA.

The report on the *Driving the Agenda of Pneumococcal Pneumonia Vaccination in At-risk Populations in Community and Long-term Care* study is now available on IFA’s Vaccines4Life website: <https://www.vaccines4life.com/adult-pneumonia-vaccination-in-ltc-settings-in-canada/>

For more information or any inquiries, please contact Ms. Mitali Mistry, Policy and Project Coordinator at the IFA at mmistry@ifa.ngo.