

CHANGING THE CONVERSATION ON ADULT INFLUENZA VACCINATION



Campaign Overview: China

Authors

Ms. Yifan Zheng
Dr. Jane Barratt



Contents

Executive Summary	1
Demographic Details	2
Context	2
Government Campaign	2
Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention	3
Status of Influenza Vaccination Campaign	5
References	6

Authors
Ms. Yifan Zheng
Dr. Jane Barratt

Design
Ms. Chesley Ryder

Reviewer
Ms. Anna Sangster



Executive Summary

In China, public health authorities such as the National Health Commission of the People's Republic of China and the Chinese Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (China CDC) are leading forces that drive public health education and communication on adult influenza vaccination, yet there are considerable gaps in messaging especially to at-risk populations. The gaps uncovered, however, should be tempered with the reality of one of the largest populations in the world, and the absence of a national immunization plan.

The free influenza vaccine program is not available for at-risk groups at a national level which in some way impacts the maturity of messages to the public. Immunization across the life course is not generally communicated as a preventative measure within a public health framework; and this remains one of the key obstacles to improving uptake rates across the nation.

In the absence of a universal campaign guide, the emphasis of the national campaign is largely misplaced—most education materials and information are produced for health care professionals, and to a lesser extent consumers. Messages directed at the public and at-risk populations are still in the early stages of development and as such resources are limited and insufficient. Additionally, the information sharing is restricted because of the lack of hard copies and formatted education materials.

While the China CDC website is a primary source of information for consumers to learn about influenza-related knowledge, it is not fully developed nor updated, e.g. the surveillance data is only up to 2005. Moreover, online information about influenza and vaccines is not organized so users need to shift back and forth to obtain all relevant information.

Demographic Details

China, in 2018, had an estimated population of 1.4 billion with 17.6% under the age of 15 years and 11.2% (155.9 million) of the total population aged 65 years and over. Although the total population is projected to decline, the ageing population will grow faster than almost any other country in modern history. By 2050, more than one in four people in China (26.3%) will be 65 years or older compared with only 14% in the younger cohort.

Alongside the rapid population ageing, noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) take an especially heavy toll among Chinese. It is estimated that 89% of all deaths in China were due to NCDs in 2016. Cardiovascular diseases (CVDs) represent the leading cause of death in China, with 43% of total deaths followed by chronic respiratory diseases and diabetes collectively accounting for 11%.

Context

With the increased burden of chronic diseases, older adults in China face a severe threat from influenza. On average, from 2007 to 2013, 81% of influenza-associated all-cause deaths occurred among adults aged 65 years and over. Compared with those aged less than 65 years older people are 26 times more likely to die from influenza.

Vaccination is considered the most effective way to prevent influenza yet coverage among the general population is extremely low, estimated at 1.5% - 2.2% during 2004 and 2014. The provision of free influenza vaccines for adults aged 60 years and over in Beijing only resulted in an uptake rate of 38.8% in 2013. Poor awareness of influenza vaccine was found to be the primary barrier to vaccination in older Chinese.

To bring awareness to the importance of influenza vaccination, the government of China and the China CDC are major forces in driving public communication. Messages target the general population in the main and then to a lesser extent at-risk groups.

National Government

Pilot program

In China, influenza vaccine is not funded by the central government, nor included in the National Immunization Program (NIP). In the absence of a national program for alleviating the cost of influenza vaccination, there is a diverse patchwork of reimbursement policies at the provincial, prefecture and county levels.⁶

Since 2007, the Beijing municipal government has provided annual free influenza vaccines to local people aged 60 years and older between September and November.⁸ In response to this pilot program, 428 specific vaccination clinics coupled with a consulting hotline 12320 were established in Beijing. Prioritizing older people in the campaign led to a substantial increase of uptake in this group, from 1.69% in 1999 to 43% in 2010.

Governments of prefecture-level cities such as Karamay and Xinxiang also provide free influenza vaccination for local seniors. In addition, 61 regions in China have launched reimbursement policies to subsidize the cost of influenza vaccine for older adults who are eligible for government health insurance.⁸

Although a national influenza vaccination program for at-risk populations has yet to be realised the development and implementation of small-scale sub-national policies at pioneer cities and regions contribute to the wider public health communication about the availability and benefits of influenza vaccination.

Official guide

“Core Information on Prevention of Disability in Old Age” published by the National Health Commission of the People’s Republic of China in August 2019 is the official guide to increase the awareness and knowledge of disability prevention among general public, reduce the incidence of disability and improve the health of the elderly in China. Publicity of the guide through hard copies was required by the National Health Commission to ensure health workers and older people are well informed and take corresponding actions.

Sixteen strategies of the disability prevention in old age are listed in the guide, covering topics including health literacy, nutrition status, physical function, immunisation, mental health, social relationship, medication, disease management, functional assessment, rehabilitation, aged care, security and age-friendly environment.

Influenza vaccination is included as one of strategies of disability prevention and the message that “influenza vaccine should be given to older people under the guidance of a doctor before the flu season” is clearly delivered. In the absence of an adult/elderly immunisation schedule, the guide serves as the first official document recognizing the necessity of influenza vaccination among the older Chinese population.

Figure 1: Seven tips for influenza prevention, disseminated through newspapers and the internet



Press conference

In the 2019 spring holidays, the China National Health Commission held a press conference to report on the government's work on influenza prevention and control during the 2019 winter and spring, as well as to share basic information about prevention.

The China CDC official stated that “adults aged 65 years and older, and patients with chronic diseases are at increased risk of influenza infection, so they are advised to be vaccinated ahead of flu season”. An endocrinologist from the Beijing Hospital further highlighted the need of enhanced protection for old adults during flu season.

Based on expert presentations, seven tips for influenza prevention were agreed and disseminated through newspapers and the internet. Citizens were urged to be vaccinated against influenza before the flu season.

Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention

Web page

The China CDC website is a major source of information for the general public about influenza and the value of flu vaccination.

A detailed description of the condition of influenza in terms of diagnoses, symptoms, treatment and preventative actions is provided. Of particular note is the commentary about influenza-related complications and the seriousness of influenza infection in frail people - “influenza may worsen underlying diseases (such as heart and lung disease) or cause secondary bacterial pneumonia or primary influenza virus pneumonia” and “older adults and people with various chronic diseases or weakened immunity are prone to serious complications or even death due to influenza.”

The China CDC emphasizes that annual vaccination is the most effective way to prevent influenza. In line with the World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines, the CDC suggests priority groups for vaccination to include children aged 6 months to 5 years, pregnant women, older people aged 60 years and over, patients with chronic diseases, medical staff, carers, and the family of infants under 6 months.

News release













Clear demonstration and positive communications from official sources serve as models motivating vaccination and reducing hesitancy.

The China CDC regularly uses news releases to draw public attention to the serious consequences of influenza and the most effective protection being that of vaccination. A news article published after the Summit on Seasonal Influenza Prevention and Control Strategies recommended that people aged 60 years and over and patients with chronic diseases should be given top priority for influenza vaccination.

Prior to the 2018/2019 flu season, a government announcement from Beijing and a message from the Director of China CDC was also disseminated to the local seniors via various news releases. CDC also encouraged the general public to consider the influenza vaccination as a protection for themselves and their families.

Several news articles feature the latest scientific studies on the danger of influenza which includes summarizing international studies on the relationship between acute myocardial infarction and influenza which concluded that for people with existing heart disease, influenza vaccination is of great value.

Status of National Influenza Vaccination Campaign

Comprehensive policies and programs	Influenza vaccination is recommended by government and advisory bodies for at-risk populations including older adults and people with chronic diseases	
	Influenza vaccination is funded under the National Immunization Program (NIP) and administered through the state program for at-risk populations including older adults and people with chronic disease	
Clear communication strategy	Published context-specific communication strategy and action plan which defines communication goals, target audiences, expected roles of partner organizations, communication tools and timeline	
Well-defined audience	Universal message distributed to undifferentiated populations (general audiences regardless of age and underlying health condition)	
	Dedicated and tailored information for specific at-risk audience	
Multiple tools and channels	Online communication such as web content, digital technology, social media, online publications, email	
	Messages are disseminated offline by TV, radio, printout (e.g. leaflet, poster, brochure, outdoor ads)	
	Interactive communication including individual consultation, street campaign and face-to-face mobilization	
Realistic timeline	Timely flu season alert and vaccination reminder	
	National/regional events scheduled for intensive awareness campaign such as national vaccination day/week/month	
Regular updates of information	Information is updated on a regular basis to reflect the most recent evidence and policy, such as recommending newly licensed vaccines for specific recipient	
Engagement and support of civil society	Communication on influenza by patient associations, ageing organizations and advocacy groups	

 Well-developed
  Partially developed
  Not yet developed / No evidence

References

1. Health Nutrition and Population Statistics | DataBank. (n.d.). Retrieved 16 August 2019, from <https://databank.worldbank.org/source/health-nutrition-and-population-statistics>.
2. China's Ageing Population Becoming More Of A Problem. (n.d.). Retrieved 3 September 2019, from <https://www.forbes.com/sites/kenrapoza/2017/02/21/chinas-ageing-population-becoming-more-of-a-problem/#78019b9f140f>.
3. Population Estimates and Projections | DataBank. (n.d.). Retrieved 29 August 2019, from <https://databank.worldbank.org/source/population-estimates-and-projections>.
4. Noncommunicable Diseases Country Profiles 2018 | WHO. (n.d.). Retrieved 26 August 2019, from <http://www.who.int/nmh/countries/en/>.
5. Wu, S, Wei, Z, Greene, CM, et al. Mortality burden from seasonal influenza and 2009 H1N1 pandemic influenza in Beijing, China, 2007-2013. *Influenza Other Respi Viruses*. 2018; 12: 88– 97. <https://doi.org/10.1111/irv.12515>
6. Yang J, Atkins KE, Feng L, et al. Seasonal influenza vaccination in China: Landscape of diverse regional reimbursement policy, and budget impact analysis. *Vaccine*. 2016;34(47):5724-5735. doi:10.1016/j.vaccine.2016.10.013
7. Fang R. et al. 北京市老年人家庭结构对其免费接种流感疫苗的影响. *中华预防医学杂志*第49卷第12期(2015年12月). Retrieved 3 September 2019, from <http://www.pubhealth.org.cn/doc/file/2015/12/0253-9624-49-12-002s.pdf>
8. Wang Q, Yue N, Zheng M, et al. Influenza vaccination coverage of population and the factors influencing influenza vaccination in mainland China: A meta-analysis. *Vaccine*. 2018;36(48):7262-7269. doi:10.1016/j.vaccine.2018.10.045
9. 北京流感疫苗开始接种 四价苗首亮相 | 新华网. (n.d.). Retrieved 4 September 2019, from http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2018-10/23/c_1123597569.htm.
10. Wu S, Yang P, Li H, Ma C, Zhang Y, Wang Q. Influenza vaccination coverage rates among adults before and after the 2009 influenza pandemic and the reasons for non-vaccination in Beijing, China: a cross-sectional study. *BMC Public Health*. 2013;13:636. Published 2013 Jul 8. doi:10.1186/1471-2458-13-636
11. 国家卫生健康委办公厅关于印发老年失能预防核心信息的通知. (n.d.). Retrieved 30 August 2019, from <http://www.nhc.gov.cn/ljks/s7788/201908/81fcf0e4d6484fca345b9284d272e05.shtml>.
12. 注意防流感，健康过春节_滚动新闻 | 中国政府网. (n.d.). Retrieved 4 September 2019, from http://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2019-01/26/content_5361308.htm.
13. 中国疾病预防控制中心. (n.d.). Retrieved 5 September 2019, from http://www.chinacdc.cn/jkzt/crb/bl/lxxgm/zstd/200510/t20051031_24115.html.
14. 中国疾病预防控制中心. (n.d.). Retrieved 5 September 2019, from http://www.chinacdc.cn/jkzt/crb/bl/lxxgm/zstd/201610/t20161025_134979.html.
15. 中国疾病预防控制中心. (n.d.). Retrieved 5 September 2019, from http://www.chinacdc.cn/gwxx/201908/t20190821_204896.html.
16. 中国疾病预防控制中心. (n.d.). Retrieved 5 September 2019, from http://www.chinacdc.cn/mtbd_8067/201810/t20181030_196735.html.
17. 中国疾病预防控制中心. (n.d.). Retrieved 5 September 2019, from http://www.chinacdc.cn/gwxx/201802/t20180202_158628.html.

CHANGING THE CONVERSATION ON ADULT INFLUENZA VACCINATION

vaccines4life.com/changing-the-conversation/

