

## RSV Campaign Press Release

November 2023 – The International Federation on Ageing (IFA) is proud to announce the successful launch of the *Tackling RSV: Raising awareness, driving prevention* campaign. In collaboration with GSK Canada, the IFA is eager to raise awareness of Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) and the risk for older adults during peak season (October-April). This comprehensive campaign targets policymakers, patients, clinicians, and advocacy organizations to address knowledge gaps, raise awareness, and disseminate good practices. With the release of the new RSV vaccine, this campaign also seeks to relay important information on the vaccine to promote uptake among older Canadians this RSV season.

Every year, RSV results in many older adults experiencing life-altering consequences, with estimates of 470,000 hospitalizations and 33,000 deaths in those aged 60 years and over in high-income countries in 2019 (1). Despite such staggering numbers and the growing evidence indicating that the burden of RSV is comparable to influenza, there is a significant underestimation of the disease burden in older adults (1). The COVID-19 pandemic served as a stark reminder that vaccines are one of the most effective public health interventions of our time, saving and improving the quality of lives of millions each year (2). With RSV being a significant cause of viral lower respiratory tract illness, it is crucial to disseminate the benefits of the newly approved vaccine for older adults, raise awareness of RSV as a vaccine-preventable disease and encourage those most at risk to speak to their healthcare providers about how they can protect themselves.

“Utilizing targeted messaging to spread awareness of the risks of RSV through social media, and highlighting the lived experiences of RSV patients is central to this campaign,” states Emma Schmidt, Policy and Program Coordinator at the IFA.

“RSV is a misunderstood and underrepresented viral illness that can greatly impact the lives of those that contract the disease. The ability to get vaccinated remains the best way to prevent this respiratory illness.”

The IFA’s RSV campaign consists of a series of activities focused on three key areas, prevention, access, and equity, to ensure older Canadians are aware of the risk of RSV infection and are appropriately informed on how to prevent severe illness. The campaign features targeted educational tools such as a message bank and fact sheet, which offer a collection of RSV-related content with an emphasis on the RSV vaccine for older adults. Additionally, a two-part podcast series features insight from an expert clinician, Dr. Christine Palmay, and a patient testimony to relay their experience with RSV infection and its impact on individuals with comorbidities. Additionally, will be the focus of an expert discussion with Dr. Alan Kaplan, Chairperson of the Respiratory Section of the College of Family Physicians of Canada, as part of the IFA’s weekly [Global Café](#) series on 10 November from 8.00-9.00am EST. The campaign serves as an opportunity to increase our collective understanding and awareness of knowledge gaps among Canadians regarding RSV and promote RSV vaccine uptake.

To learn more about the RSV campaign, visit <https://www.vaccines4life.com/rsv-campaign/> to view these resources and more.

## Media Contact

Please contact Anna Sangster at [asangster@ifa.ngo](mailto:asangster@ifa.ngo) should you have any questions or would like any additional information about the RSV Campaign.

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### About the International Federation on Ageing (IFA)

IFA is an international, non-governmental organization (NGO) with a unique membership base comprising government, NGOs, academics, industry, and individuals in over 80 countries. Over the last 45 years, the IFA has become known as a leading and innovative organization that works across disciplines and sectors toward common goals that improve the lives of older people.

Improving rates of vaccination for globally is a priority of IFA, as a key contributor to healthy ageing. The IFA, across almost a decade, and through the [Vaccines4Life](#) program, has worked alongside committed organizations to address barriers to improve adult vaccination rates in the context of healthy ageing.

As a non-State actor at the World Health Organization (WHO) and with general consultative status at the United Nations and its agencies, the IFA is in the position to advocate directly with Member States and contribute to and inform intergovernmental dialogue.

### References:

- 1) Savic M, Penders Y, Shi T, Branche A, Pirçon J. Respiratory syncytial virus disease burden in adults aged 60 years and older in high-income countries: A systematic literature review and meta-analysis. *Influenza Other Respir Viruses*. 2023 Jan 11;17(1)
- 2) Watson, O. J., Barnsley, G., Toor, J., Hogan, A. B., Winskill, P., & C Ghani, P. A. C. (n.d.). *Global impact of the first year of COVID-19 vaccination: a mathematical modelling study*. *The Lancet Infectious Diseases*. [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/laninf/article/PIIS1473-3099\(22\)00320-6/fulltext?ref=quilllette.com](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/laninf/article/PIIS1473-3099(22)00320-6/fulltext?ref=quilllette.com)