

IFA launches their Shingles Atlas for Adult Vaccination (SAAV) advocacy tool to support gaps in shingles vaccination policy globally.

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The International Federation on Ageing (IFA) is proud to announce the subsequent launch of the Shingles Atlas for Adult Vaccination (SAAV) advocacy tool during World Immunization Week, which was held between 24th of April to 30th of April 2024. World Immunization Week aims to highlight the united action that is required of us all and to promote vaccination for the protection against diseases across all ages.⁽¹⁾ Following the successful initial launch of the SAAV with an international webinar held on February 2024, the IFA is most pleased to continue raising awareness about shingles disease and vaccination across the globe and support advocacy efforts to improve shingles vaccination policy and uptake.

Shingles, a vaccine-preventable disease (VPD) also known as herpes zoster, significantly impacts functional ability and quality of life. Older adults are at the greatest risk of shingles, with the highest burden in those aged 50 years and over.^(2,3) This disease is characterized by a painful rash that lasts over a few weeks caused by reactivation of the varicella zoster virus (VZV), which is the virus that causes chickenpox.⁽³⁾⁽⁴⁾ This reactivation of VZV usually occurs decades after the initial infection due to waning immune responses. Therefore anyone who has previously had chickenpox is at risk of developing shingles.⁽⁴⁾

Shingles vaccination has proven effectiveness in preventing and reducing the severity of the disease, however there is a gap in awareness and uptake of shingles vaccination amongst older adults. Shingles vaccination also remains poorly integrated within immunization policies globally despite the widespread availability of knowledge on the benefits of this vaccine. Even when this vaccination is included in national programs, the data on coverage rates is often inadequate or missing.⁽⁴⁾

The IFA's SAAV advocacy tool is an interactive map with a repository of information that has been developed to showcase and address gaps at a country-level.

“The SAAV is a tool for policy makers and other key stakeholders who advocate for the protection of older adults from shingles. This source of information at a national level enables evidence-based policy decisions and can support in enhancing shingles immunization programs.”

- *Mitali Mistry, Senior Policy and Project Coordinator, International Federation on Ageing*

As shingles vaccination uptake rates remain low globally, there is a need to clearly document the policy gaps and where possible, gather intelligence on barriers to influencing policy and improving practice. The overarching goal of the SAAV is to provide up-to-date and easily accessible information and data on country-specific shingles vaccination programs, recommendations, coverage rates, burden of shingles disease, vaccination monitoring mechanisms, vaccination pathways, and barriers. The SAAV is available on the IFA's [Vaccines4Life \(V4L\) platform](#) and will continue to be updated as countries navigate changes to shingles vaccination regulations and policies.

Media Contact

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

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 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.

The IFA has general consultative status at the United Nations and as a non-State actor at the World Health Organization (WHO) is in a position to contribute to and inform intergovernmental dialogue, while support civil society at a national and local level.

References

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