



INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION ON AGEING
Global Connections



Plenary Panel – “Life Course Approach to Immunization”

Abstract

Immunization is a core component of the human right to health, a standard element in any effective, preventative public health approach, and an individual, community, and governmental responsibility. Despite these known facts, there is not enough being done across the world to protect people of all ages from serious infectious diseases such as the flu, pneumonia, whooping cough, shingles, meningitis, diphtheria, and tetanus.

Much research has shown that older adults run an increased risk of contracting vaccine-preventable diseases. It is unacceptable that these diseases continue to adversely affect the quality of life of older people when the solutions are known, easily accessible, and cost-effective. Healthy older adults make significant social and economic contributions to community and society.

Current advocacy efforts to promote the importance of immunization have focused primarily on children, yet there is a grave lack of awareness about the fact that older people are equally, if not more vulnerable to the spread of infectious diseases. The deterioration of immune system capacity in later life combined with the realities of contemporary demographic change illustrate why there is a critical need for action surrounding the promotion of a life course approach to immunization.

Adult immunization rates will not be increased until the fundamental lack of awareness about the benefits of vaccinations and failure of individuals and health practitioners to adhere to research based recommendations about vaccines are addressed. There is an urgent need to develop community, national, and international adult immunization programs.

Expert delegates on this panel will discuss life-course vaccinations in a variety of contexts, demonstrating from a social, clinical, and public health perspective why there is an imminent need to develop an adequate policy framework to generate awareness about the importance of a life course approach to immunization and to ensure that this awareness translates into increased immunization coverage globally.