



INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION ON AGEING
Global Connections



Plenary Panel – “Life Course Immunization”

Abstract

Immunization is a core component of the human right to health, a standard element in the preventative public health approach, and an individual, community, and governmental responsibility. With the exception of safe water, no other innovation has been as impactful in reducing mortality and influencing population growth throughout the world. Despite this fact, it seems that the adult-aged population is still woefully unaware of the demonstrated benefits of remaining vaccinated throughout the life course and the ultimate impact that this can have on healthy ageing.

Current advocacy efforts to promote the importance of immunization have focused primarily on children, yet little has been done globally to promote the importance of ‘a life course approach’ to vaccination. Of course, vaccinating children will always remain a global priority, but future projections illustrate that the global population of those over 60 years of age will surpass the total population of those under 15 years of age by the year 2050. There is an urgent need to recognise this unprecedented demographic shift and the emerging need to place an equal emphasis on the vaccination of adults.

The context of the global ageing revolution further reinforces the importance of life-course vaccination. Much research has shown that older adults run an increased risk of contracting vaccine-preventable diseases like pneumococcal pneumonia, influenza, herpes zoster, tetanus, and hepatitis B, among many others. 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.

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 action.