

The Role of Adult Vaccination as Part of Healthy Ageing

Last year saw Conclusions from the European Council of Health Ministers calling for a greater focus on vaccination. This focus remains high on the public health agenda, and in response to these the European Commission Communication on Vaccination is expected to publish concrete recommendations to Member States in 2016. Furthermore an EU Joint Action on Vaccination, anticipated in 2016, will provide a forum to share information and best practice between the Member States. While these initiatives are welcomed, disparities persist in relation to vaccine recommendations and highlight how more needs to be implemented at a local level to maximise vaccination as an effective public health tool in Europe.

A Growing Problem

“Longevity has been one of the greatest achievements of recent decades but it has implications for social, economic and health systems.”

Professor Carlo Signorelli, President of the Italian Society of Hygiene, Preventive Medicine and Public Health (SItI)

 **GLOBALLY, THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE AGED OVER 60 HAS TRIPLED IN THE LAST 50 YEARS¹ AND BY 2050 ~1 IN 3 OF EUROPE'S POPULATION WILL BE AGED OVER 60²**

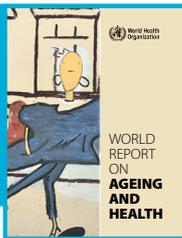
- An ageing population results in an increased burden of disease and higher rates of hospitalisation, increasing the pressure on health services³

The Role of Vaccination

- The immune system becomes less effective with age meaning adult immunisation is especially important, and plays a key part in healthy ageing⁴
- With older populations significantly impacted by flu and pneumococcal pneumonia, protection against vaccine-preventable diseases needs to be a routine part of adult healthcare. Currently in the EU vaccination coverage rates vary around only 49% and 10% respectively⁵

FIGURES FROM THE US SHOW THAT AROUND 400,000 PEOPLE ARE HOSPITALISED DUE TO PNEUMOCOCCAL PNEUMONIA EVERY YEAR

AND FOR OLDER PEOPLE THE RISK OF DYING FROM THE DISEASE IS MUCH HIGHER⁶



The WHO published the *World Report on Ageing and Health* in September 2015, which found “there is very little evidence that the added years of life are being experienced in better health than was the case for previous generations at the same age.” They have called for “a world in which everyone experiences healthy ageing – the process of developing and maintaining the functional ability that enables well-being in older age.”⁷

Overcoming the Barriers

- With an increasing ageing population there is a pressing need to protect older adults through better prevention strategies and to implement a life course approach to immunisation as part of healthy ageing policies
- Most people say they would accept a vaccination if recommended by their healthcare professional, however only 36% have received a recommendation in their adult life,⁸ highlighting a need to better educate those on the ground about the importance of vaccination and its role as an effective public health tool
- Dr Jane Barratt, Secretary General of the International Federation on Ageing has called for union amongst the key vaccine interested stakeholders to bring about change: “It’s time that those who are committed to this field across all sectors join together and ensure that older adults of today – and those that come after us – have the benefits of adult vaccination.”

References

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