

WORLD PNEUMONIA DAY 2018



FULL STATEMENT

Today, in honour of World Pneumonia Day, The International Federation on Ageing joins the Alliance for Aging Research, the European Federation of Allergy and Airways Diseases Patients' Associations, the European Geriatric Medicine Society, the European Interdisciplinary Council on Ageing, the Immunisation Coalition, Immunize Canada, the International Longevity Centre UK, and Vaccines Today in the fight against pneumococcal pneumonia, a potentially life-threatening illness that can cause serious complications in vulnerable populations. The pneumococcal vaccination is a vital component of comprehensive public health strategy on healthy ageing that helps in the prevention of disability or death from this preventable disease, maintaining independence and decreasing the need for sustained home and long-term care.

Our organizations recognize that pneumonia differentially affects certain subgroups of the population, for example older people and people with chronic conditions, and that "underlying conditions, such as heart disease, lung diseases [such as asthma and COPD], diabetes, rheumatologic diseases, and immunosuppressive conditions, such as cancer or use of immunosuppressive drugs increase the predisposition to and severity of pneumonia and adversely influence the outcome in older patients." [1]

Despite the increasing risk and burden of disease for pneumonia as one ages and has a higher likelihood of multiple chronic conditions, awareness campaigns often lack information on the risks of pneumonia in older people and at-risk groups. World Pneumonia Day (12 November) is a timely reminder to highlight those sub-populations who are most at-risk and to "generate action to combat pneumonia." [2]

Recognizing the risks of pneumonia across the life course is vital to raising awareness of the life changing impact of infectious diseases such as influenza which can drive excess mortality from pneumonia in the older adult population. In fact, the most common complication [of influenza] in older adults is pneumonia, a risk which is further increased with underlying chronic cardiopulmonary disease. [3]

Preventing pneumonia and the associated consequences is crucial to healthy ageing, maintaining and improving functional ability, and to allowing people to contribute to their community and society. [4] Yet, the PneuVUE study shows that only 29% of people surveyed are aware that a vaccine for pneumonia exists, and an even smaller percentage (16%) of those at high risk have been vaccinated. [4]

The preservation of functional ability as fundamental to a person's health and wellbeing is a hallmark of the World Health Organization (WHO) World report on ageing and health (2015). The protection of vulnerable people from diseases such as pneumonia is an essential component to safeguarding that ability and leading to healthy ageing.

Improvement in uptake rates of vaccination requires a multipronged approach unique to the local situation and targeted to individuals with different chronic conditions. Essential to all approaches is accurate knowledge and education to improve the awareness of individuals and health care professionals; easy access to vaccine gateways such as general practitioners and pharmacists; governmental recognition of the social and economic return on investment of adult pneumococcal vaccinations; and effective surveillance measures across age.



WORLD PNEUMONIA DAY 2018

This World Pneumonia Day, our organizations commit to:

- Supporting pneumonia awareness across the life course, paying special attention to vulnerable populations that are currently underserved and at greater risk;
- Communicating the long-term morbidity and mortality associated with pneumococcal pneumonia;
- Encouraging both influenza and pneumococcal vaccination with the knowledge that there is a higher risk of pneumonia triggered by influenza;
- Calling on governments to invest in pneumococcal vaccination for adults as well as children.

CONTACT:

Dr Jane Barratt
 Secretary General
 International Federation on Ageing
 jbarratt@ifa-fiv.org | +1 416 342 1655

This statement is supported by:



[1] Breen, Thomas R., and Thomas M. File. "Community-Acquired Pneumonia in Older Adults." *Current Geriatrics Reports*, vol. 4, no. 1, July 2015, pp. 51–59., doi:10.1007/s13670-014-0112-7.
 [2] "World Pneumonia Day." World Health Organization, World Health Organization, 18 Sept. 2018, www.who.int/life-course/news/events/world-pneumonia-day-2018/en/.
 [3] Schaffner, William, et al. "Seasonal Influenza Immunisation: Strategies for Older Adults." *International Journal of Clinical Practice*, vol. 72, no. 10, 2018, doi:10.1111/ijcp.13249.
 [4] Ipsos MORI. *PneuVue Adult Pneumonia Vaccine Understanding in Europe: A New View into Pneumonia among Older Adults*. 2016, www.ipsos.com/ipsos-mori/en-uk/pneuvue-new-view-pneumonia-among-older-adults.