

Challenges and Opportunities Of Health Technology Assessment In older adult Immunization

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Background & Objectives

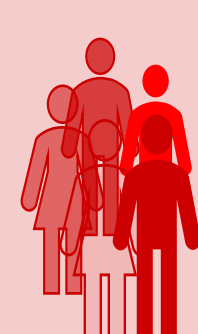
The added value of national immunization programs are considered excellent, with a positive return on investment¹. Current immunization programs are mainly focused on the preventive immunization of children rather than the immunization of older adults. However, with an aging world population, a focus on healthy aging becomes crucial for a sustainable healthcare system with an important role for older adult immunization. The assessment of older adult immunization comes with substantial challenges. Drawing upon the review of relevant literature, recent study cases and a panel discussion by the health technology assessment international (HTAi) Public Health interest group², a list of HTA challenges and opportunities for older adult vaccination are defined that could be instrumental to foster implementation of lifelong immunization.

“Vaccination is a simple, safe, and effective way of protecting people against harmful infectious diseases and is a key component of healthy ageing. Yet globally, rates of adult vaccination are suboptimal.”³

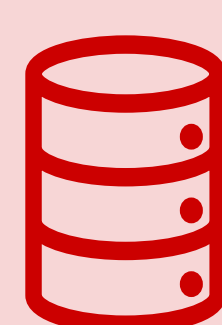
Main findings

Challenges

There is a great heterogeneity in disease burden and vaccine effect in the older adult population due to variables including immunosenescence⁴, comorbidities, functional status, and frailty⁵.



Lack of surveillance data targeting the older adult population which causes a knowledge gap between population heterogeneity and vaccine effectiveness



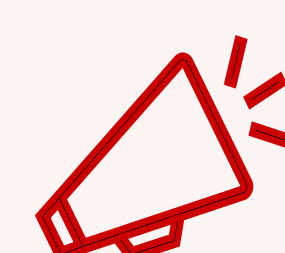
Health equity concerns which could potentially be misaligned with prioritization of sub-groups: the goal to give every person the opportunity to attain his/her full health vs. the public perception to prioritize health for the young over the old



The need of advanced value assessments to accommodate the heterogeneity of the population and inform policy making while dealing with a lack of surveillance data;



The public perception with respect to vaccination acceptance/hesitancy which could be decisive in the effectiveness of a vaccination program⁶. A negative public opinion could prevent attaining optimal vaccination-coverage and benefits.



Opportunities

Introduce specific adult working groups within National Immunisation Technical Advisory Groups (NITAGs) as permanent workgroups (e.g., as in the UK and US)

Filling key evidence gaps by establishing inclusive surveillance systems and make better use of existing healthcare data-sources for improved insight in the epidemiology of vaccine preventable diseases (VPDs)

Establish dedicated budget plans for prevention with a long-term horizon, so that policy decisions that foster healthy ageing can be implemented to create a sustainable healthcare system.

Develop standardized/transferrable assessment methods adapted for older adult vaccination, which is crucial to come to robust policy and funding decisions.

Strengthen transparency of assessment methods and procedures to improve trust within healthcare and the society, and allow for extensive external validation.

Conclusion

Vaccination will be paramount to reduce the impact of VPDs in the adult and older adult population and resulting burden on the healthcare system. Global interest in strengthening evidence-based policymaking for vaccination is increasing. It is therefore the right time to reconsider immunization programs for older adults, think how HTA could serve in fostering older adults' vaccination and to convey the message that implementing preventive measures and promoting lifelong immunization programs are instrumental to secure healthcare systems' sustainability.

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