

Addressing the Significant Impact of RSV Infections Among Older Canadians

More work to be done to promote and support improved access to vaccines

TORONTO, October 4, 2023 — Even though most children will experience their first respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) infection by the age of two, adults 65 years and older experience significantly more complications, with this age group having the highest mortality rate attributable to RSV infections. A new highly effective RSV vaccine for adults 60 years and older has recently been approved for the first time in Canada, however, a lot more work needs to be done as vaccination rates in this age group are underwhelmingly low.

The NIA's report [*Addressing the Significant Impact of RSV Infections among Older Canadians. It's Time for Action.*](#) provides information on the burden of RSV infections, the recent development of new highly effective RSV vaccines, and the ongoing challenges and opportunities surrounding vaccination among older Canadians.

"Immunization against RSV is a significantly protective measure that older Canadians and their healthcare providers should strongly consider" says Dr. Samir Sinha, Director of Health Policy Research at the NIA. "Not only are older Canadians more vulnerable to RSV infections but we notice the significant burden of these infections increases with age."

"An important component to RSV vaccination efforts will be health care providers, as we have seen what impact their involvement and recommendations could have," explains Arushan Arulnamby, Policy Analyst at the NIA and lead author of the new report. "Factors such as cost could also be a barrier to ensuring older adults consider vaccination to protect themselves, and thus more needs to be done to address this."

To decrease the overall impact of RSV infections across Canada, and to support the efforts of health authorities and organizations to increase vaccine uptake, the NIA's report provides nine evidence-informed policy recommendations:

1. Promote General Preventive Practices
2. Improve the Surveillance of RSV Cases Across Canada and Understanding of its Implications on Canadian Healthcare Systems
3. Continue to Work on the Development of RSV Vaccines
4. Promote a Life-Course Vaccination Schedule that Includes Older Adults
5. Provide RSV Vaccinations Free of Cost to Eligible Canadians
6. Promote Following NACI Statements for RSV Vaccination

7. Provide Clinician Education and Support for Pharmacists, Primary Care and Other Health Care Providers to Deliver RSV Vaccinations
8. Harmonize Vaccination Administration Across and Within Canada's Provinces/Territories
9. Establish Accurate Reporting and Monitoring of RSV Vaccination Rates

If you are interested in discussing the importance of RSV vaccination with the authors of the report, Arushan Arulnamby, NIA Policy Analyst or Dr. Samir Sinha, NIA Director of Health Policy Research, please contact Magdalen Stiff, Director of Communications at magdalen.stiff@torontomu.ca.

Funding for this report was generously provided by GlaxoSmithKline, Moderna and Pfizer Canada in the form of unrestricted educational grants. All of the research, writing and recommendations herein have been independently produced by the NIA on the basis of sound evidence.

-30-

About The National Institute on Ageing

The National Institute on Ageing (NIA), based at Toronto Metropolitan University (TMU; formerly Ryerson University), is Canada's leading policy and research centre dedicated to enhancing successful and healthy ageing throughout people's lives. Through our collaborative approach, expert-driven analysis, and public-facing reports and tools, the NIA provides meaningful research, analysis, advice and advocacy on the most pressing issues that are affecting the health and wellbeing of older Canadians.