

## **New report shows flu vaccination rates for older Canadians lag behind other OECD nations - Canadian health care providers also fall short on flu vaccinations**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE - February 5, 2018** – Fewer than a third of all Canadians get the flu vaccine each year, including fewer than two-thirds of seniors and only half of health care providers, falling far short of the immunization rates needed to protect the broader population, according to a new report by the National Institute on Ageing (NIA), at Ryerson University.

The NIA's newest report [\*\*\*"The Underappreciated Burden of Influenza Amongst Canada's Older Population. And What We Need to Do About It,"\*\*\*](#) authored by [\*\*\*Dr. Samir Sinha\*\*\*](#), Ivy Wong and Julie Dunning, found that only 29% of all Canadians and 62% of older Canadians, receive the influenza vaccine each year. The report also found that only 50% of Canadian health care providers receive the seasonal influenza vaccine. An 80% vaccination rate is recommended for population-level protection against contracting and spreading influenza, according to Health Canada.

In fact, vaccination rates amongst older Canadians appear to have declined over the past decade, and continue to fall. Canada's influenza vaccination rate for those over 65 is lower than other developed countries such as New Zealand, the United States, and the United Kingdom.

*"Canada needs to step up its game when it comes to preventing the flu. Most Canadians don't see the flu as a serious threat to their health – but influenza can lead to severe illnesses resulting in hospitalization or death, which we're seeing more of this season in particular," said Dr. Sinha. "The flu can be particularly hazardous to young children and adults over age 65, and we need to do more not only to protect ourselves, but to protect the most vulnerable among us."*

The authors also found that Canadian health care institutions and providers have inconsistent and inadequate vaccination policies and outcomes that contribute to low provider uptake of the vaccination.

*"This is a shockingly low rate of vaccination for health professionals who are in constant contact with vulnerable patients," said Sinha. "Patients should be able to expect that their health provider is also taking all possible steps to protect them from the flu."*

Influenza is the 7<sup>th</sup> leading cause of death in Canada, leading to an average of 3,500 deaths and 12,200 hospitalizations each year. Yet the report highlights that despite the continued efforts of public health outreach campaigns to promote uptake of the seasonal influenza vaccine, older Canadians aged 65-plus remain under-vaccinated and are among those at greatest risk for influenza and its potential deadly consequences, especially in a severe flu season as we're now experiencing.

*"Immunization has saved more lives in Canada than any other single medical intervention. Some provincial governments and public health bodies have in recent years made great strides in funding and promoting influenza vaccination, but clearly, more needs to be done," said Michael Nicin, Executive Director of the NIA.*

The report makes 8 evidence-informed recommendations, including: universal funding for the influenza vaccination in all provinces, guidelines that strongly recommend the influenza vaccine for all health care providers while mandating the vaccine for health care providers and residents in long-term care homes, and promotion of a life-course vaccination schedule that includes older adults.

[Read the full Report here](#)

Quick Facts:

- Influenza is the 7<sup>th</sup> leading cause of death in Canada, leading to an average of 3,500 deaths and 12,200 hospitalizations each year
- Respiratory infections (including influenza, colds, and other respiratory infections) have the second-highest indirect health care costs in Canada totaling \$2.8 billion in 2008 alone
- While 7 of Canada's provinces and all of its territories now provide universal funding for influenza vaccinations, British Columbia, Quebec, and New Brunswick still do not.

**About the National Institute on Ageing (NIA)**

*The National Institute on Ageing (NIA) is a new policy and research centre based at Ryerson University in Toronto. The NIA is dedicated to enhancing successful ageing across the life course. It is unique in its mandate to consider ageing issues from a broad range of important perspectives, including those of financial, physical, psychological, and social wellness. The NIA is focused on leading cross-disciplinary research that can lead to the development of actionable insights that meaningfully contribute towards shaping the policies, practices and products needed to address the challenges and opportunities presented by Canada's coming of age. The NIA is committed to providing national leadership and promoting a collaborative approach and global partnerships with other academic centres, and other ageing-related organizations. The NIA is proudly funded in partnership with organizations that work on issues related to ageing. All of the research and work produced by the NIA is conducted independently and on the basis of sound evidence.*

*To learn more about the NIA visit our website at <http://www.ryerson.ca/nia> and follow us on Twitter @RyersonNIA*

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