

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Why are so many people dying of a preventable disease in Canada?

New report shows action needed to increase pneumonia vaccination rates

TORONTO, March 21, 2019 - Urgent action is needed to address Canada's low vaccination rates when it comes to pneumonia, according to a new report by the [National Institute on Ageing](#) (NIA) at Ryerson University.

'As One of Canada's Top Killers, Why isn't Pneumonia Taken More Seriously?' authored by [Dr. Samir Sinha](#) shows that pneumonia is causing a concerning increase in hospitalizations, even when the disease is not deadly. Pneumonia kills more than 6,000 Canadians each year, and 87 per cent of those are older adults over the age of 65.

"We need far greater awareness that many cases of pneumonia can be prevented by vaccination," said Sinha. "We need to do a much better job of educating doctors and other health care providers around the importance of the pneumococcal vaccine and best practices for increasing its uptake."

Pneumonia is consistently among the leading causes of in-hospital deaths and is among one of the top ten reasons that people went to emergency departments in Canada, with 135,000 pneumonia-related ED visits last year, despite the fact that pneumonia, in many cases, can be prevented by vaccination.

Canadian vaccination rates remain too low and most people are unaware of their own vaccination record. The Public Health Agency of Canada set a vaccination target rate for pneumonia at 80 per cent for Canadians over the age of 65, but only 42 per cent have been vaccinated. In a survey of Canadians, 88 per cent reported that they were up-to-date on their vaccinations, but only three per cent were actually up-to-date. Currently, Canada would have to almost double the uptake of the pneumonia vaccine over the age of 65 to meet national targets.

This low uptake of the pneumococcal vaccine is costing public health systems. The predicted hospital cost per case in 2015 ranged from a low of \$8,510 in Ontario to \$12,671 in Alberta. Projections suggest that by 2025 the costs per each case of pneumonia will range from a low of \$8,689 in PEI to a high of \$18,340 in Manitoba.

There are a number of factors that contribute to low vaccination rates including a lack of awareness about which vaccines are needed as adults, when they are needed, and the role of health care providers in recommending vaccines.

"Vaccination is more important than ever, as we are seeing the results of vaccine hesitancy or unawareness across the globe, and pneumonia is part of that picture," said [Michael Nicin](#), Executive Director of the NIA. "There are proven policies to increase uptake of the pneumococcal vaccine, including permitting pharmacists to administer the vaccine across the country to make it more universally accessible. We also think it's time to consider mandating the pneumococcal vaccine for residents of long-term care homes."

[Read Full Report here.](#)

Quick Facts

- More than 25 percent of emergency department visits for pneumonia led to a hospital admission for at least one night.
- People who acquire both influenza and pneumonia have worse outcomes, increased hospitalization, and sustain more damage to their lungs. Studies have found reductions in death, hospital stays and costs when older adults are vaccinated against both diseases.
- Ontario's Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care estimates that by vaccinating all individuals in Long-Term Care homes against influenza, they could prevent up to 60 per cent of hospitalizations due to pneumonia as a complication of influenza and up to 85 per cent of related deaths.

About the National Institute on Ageing (NIA)

The NIA is a think tank focused on meeting the realities of Canada's ageing population. We are Canada's only think tank dedicated to policy solutions at the intersections of healthcare, financial security, and social well-being in relation to ageing. We do evidence and experience driven research founded on the strongest available evidence and original research. Our team is led by experts and practitioners in the fields of financial security, healthcare delivery, and public policy. With the backing of Ryerson University and our industry partners we work across private and public sectors providing solutions that promote the evolution and sustainability of Canadian systems and programs. Our mission is to make Canada the best place to grow up and grow old.

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