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Canadian Association of Retired Persons (CARP) federal government pre-budget consultations re adult vaccines

RECOMMENDATION

CARP recommends that the federal government allocate additional resources to the provinces and territories so they can provide the latest vaccines to their older adult population and undertake public awareness activities to increase uptake of these vaccines to prevent serious illnesses – including pneumococcal disease, respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), shingles and COVID – and help alleviate pressures on our overstretched health system.

RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATION

Many serious illnesses, which take an immense toll every year on older adults and the health system, can now be prevented through the administration of safe and effective vaccines. Many more of these vaccines are in clinical development.

Every case of illness prevented saves thousands of dollars for the health system and weeks of discomfort and distress for patients and their families, and even death in some cases. Older Canadians more than anyone in the country experienced this during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Serious adult illnesses that can now be prevented or mitigated with vaccines include pneumococcal disease (such as pneumonia), respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), shingles (herpes zoster), COVID and others. However, vaccination rates are not where they should be to ensure Canadians and their health systems get maximum benefit.

For example, Canadian public health authorities are striving for a goal of 80% vaccine coverage for pneumococcal disease by Canadians aged 65 and older but the current rate is just 55%.¹ That means our health system – and not to mention the individuals involved – is barely getting half the benefit it could from this simple preventive measure.

¹ Health Canada, Vaccination Coverage Goals and Vaccine Preventable Disease Reduction Targets by 2025, August 2022, <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/immunization-vaccine-priorities/national-immunization-strategy/vaccination-coverage-goals-vaccine-preventable-diseases-reduction-targets-2025.html#1.1.2>



One reason for this is that many people are unaware both of how serious these illnesses are and that they can be prevented by a simple one-time vaccine. A recent survey conducted by CARP revealed that only 52% of respondents were aware of the severity of this disease – specifically, that pneumonia coupled with the flu ranks among the top 10 leading causes of death for Canadian adults.

The CARP survey also showed that over 90% of respondents want the federal government to allocate additional financial resources to the provinces/territories so they can provide the newest pneumococcal vaccines. The survey also indicated that over 90% of respondents want governments to do more and invest more to encourage greater use of pneumococcal vaccines.

We need to ensure that there are free and easily accessible adult vaccination programs that include the latest vaccines to provide the best possible protection and health for seniors.

We therefore encourage the federal government to allocate additional funding to the provinces/territories so they can provide the latest adult vaccines and undertake broad public awareness activities to increase vaccination uptake to prevent serious illnesses, such as pneumococcal disease, RSV, shingles, COVID and others, and generate future savings for the healthcare system.

Your truly,

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The Canadian Association of Retired Persons (CARP) is a national, non-partisan, non-profit organization that advocates for financial security and improved health care for Canadians as we age. With over 225,000 members and 25 chapters across Canada, CARP Canadians. CARP advocates on behalf of older Canadians with all levels of government and collaborates with other organizations on health, ageism, housing, and financial issues.
www.CARP.ca