

Calls for a more flexible approach to vaccine funding

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Including quality-of-life impacts in assessments of national vaccination programs would lead to many benefits, including improved productivity and less sick leave for parents, according to an editorial co-authored by a University of New South Wales (UNSW) researcher, that has appeared in the *Lancet Infectious Diseases*.

Such initiatives would also protect others in society, while getting the maximum impact of population vaccination programs.

The paper, co-authored by Professor Raina MacIntyre, head of the School of Public Health and Community Medicine at UNSW, argues that governments should take a broader perspective when considering whether to fund vaccines.

The editorial stresses the holistic assessment would be better in determining the cost-effectiveness of vaccines.

"The influenza vaccine is currently recommended for those who are 65 years and older and anyone over 50 with a chronic disease - but it could be even more cost-effective in children," said Professor MacIntyre.

"Children shed viruses for longer and at higher doses than adults do, which is why families with young children are often plagued with illness," explained Professor MacIntyre, who is the senior author of the paper.

The central argument of the editorial is that vaccinations should have different funding criteria from drugs.

"Vaccines have features that require special consideration when assessing their cost-effectiveness," the authors wrote. "These features are related to herd immunity, quality-of-life losses in young children, parental care and work loss, time preference, uncertainty, eradication, macroeconomics, and tiered pricing."

The paper looks at a range of vaccination programs which could be implemented in developed countries for diseases such as chickenpox, shingles and hepatitis A.

Source: University of New South Wales

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