

Science app brings clarity on vaccination and climate

March 13 2014, by Anke Van Eekelen



The app highlights the prospect of new vaccines being used for treatment of non-infectious conditions, like autoimmune disorders, allergies and cancer. Credit: Gates Foundation

The answers to six pivotal questions on immunisation and vaccines have been addressed by a panel of 12 Australian experts in the field.

The Australian Academy of Science (AAS) recently released a free 'Science Q&A' app for tablets that contains the latest science of immunisation.

It aims to guide the public through the current science of immunisation and to help clarify uncertainties and misconceptions surrounding the issue.

In answering one pivotal question on [immunisation](#); 'what does the future hold for vaccines?' the app highlights the prospect of new vaccines being used for treatment of non-infectious conditions, like autoimmune disorders, allergies and cancer.

Among the expert panel was [vaccine](#) safety and allergy expert Professor Patrick Holt, deputy director and head of the Division of Cell Biology at the Telethon Institute for Child Health Research in Perth.

"In the basic science area of vaccinology, people like us continuously research the issues that underpin the question of [vaccine] safety versus efficacy," he says.

He says there is great concern right across the science community about the growing number of parents anxious to use vaccines.

He fears the message – that paediatric vaccines represent one of the biggest contributions of medicine to humanity – is getting lost in the background.

Growing pockets of communities where parents choose not to vaccinate their children is seeing the re-occurrence of diseases like diphtheria and whooping cough, due to a loss in herd immunity.

Reduced childhood vaccination coverage not only enhances the vulnerability of children who for health reasons cannot be vaccinated but Prof Holt says, also threatens the elderly via interaction with their grandchildren.

"As we age, the immune system winds down and we approach a level of susceptibility to these diseases as we had in infancy," Prof Holt says.

A freely available [online booklet](#) presents the same information as the app to assist as many Australians as possible in making informed decisions.

The latest information about climate science can also be found on the app, this section stemming from a previous publication by the AAS called "Science on Climate Change: Questions & Answers."

The Australian Academy of Science's Q&A app, was officially released in December 2013. Get the free [app here](#).

Provided by Science Network WA

Citation: Science app brings clarity on vaccination and climate (2014, March 13) retrieved 27 April 2024 from

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