

Why flu vaccinations will matter even more during the pandemic

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Amid all the anxiety over finding treatments for COVID-19, is the influenza virus getting the short end of the stick from policymakers in terms of investments in mitigation? In fact, flu mitigation needs more attention from policymakers, according to recent research by Wharton finance professor Jules H. van Binsbergen and Christian C. Opp,

associate professor of finance at University of Rochester's Simon Business School.

In their paper, titled "The Effectiveness of Life-Preserving Investments in Times of COVID-19," Binsbergen and Opp weigh the effectiveness of preventive investments aimed at increasing [life expectancy](#) in mitigating influenza and COVID-19. They make a case for "widespread influenza vaccination" based on their estimates of the "marginal effectiveness" of investments in mitigating both flu and COVID-19.

Their research model computes the amount of [investment](#) resources that would be needed to save an equivalent number of life years in mitigating both viruses. "Maximizing [overall life expectancy](#) requires allocating resources across hazards so as to equalize investments' marginal effectiveness," they note.

"If you're interested in saving lives, then flu vaccinations seem to be a particularly effective way of saving a lot of lives going forward," says Binsbergen. He noted the growing concerns over how the health care infrastructure would cope if a second wave of COVID-19 arrives in September. "A lot of people are already in hospitals during a typical flu season," he says. "It seems even more important to avoid that interaction, and invest more heavily in flu vaccinations to free capacity to tend to new COVID patients."

More information: Jules H. van Binsbergen et al. The Effectiveness of Life-Preserving Investments in Times of COVID-19, *SSRN Electronic Journal* (2020). [DOI: 10.2139/ssrn.3600359](https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3600359)

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