

MEDIA RELEASE for immediate release

## **Experts call for mandatory Influenza Vaccinations: The health system should embrace healthcare worker vaccination as a core safety practice to protect patients and staff**

### **Healthcare workers have a duty of care to protect vulnerable patients from the serious health threat of influenza illness!**

*Australia's leading voice in whole-of-life immunisation, the Immunisation Coalition sees healthcare workers as a priority group for influenza vaccination, not only for their own protection and ability to maintain services but also to reduce the spread of influenza to their vulnerable patients including pregnant women #HitMeWithYourBestShot*

**15 March 2018, Melbourne** - Healthcare workers (HCWs) have a duty of care to protect vulnerable patients from the serious health threat of influenza illness. Studies demonstrate that annual influenza vaccination for healthcare workers is likely to reduce illness among the patients they care for. Relying on patients being vaccinated is not enough as vulnerable people, like older people, pregnant women, young children and people with underlying medical conditions may have a poor immune response to their vaccination or may not have been vaccinated this year. Influenza vaccination uptake among Australian HCWs is about 60% and often lower – there has been some recent success in Melbourne.

Professor Robert Booy, Director of the Immunisation Coalition points out that, “although some voluntary HCW vaccination programs have been effective when combined with strong institutional leadership and robust educational campaigns, the rates of influenza vaccination amongst HCWs in Australia remain suboptimal ranging from 16.3 to 58.7%.<sup>1</sup> Flu shots should be mandatory for all healthcare workers, allied health and ancillary staff members and their employers to recognise their duty and responsibility to protect themselves, their contacts and their patients from influenza!”

The Immunisation Coalition supports the concept of mandatory healthcare worker vaccination across all healthcare settings, including nursing homes.

Professor Booy: ‘We support the development of a formal national guideline that positions vaccination as a condition of employment when working in patient contact roles. This condition should be implemented in combination with strict criteria for exemptions and the wearing of surgical masks during the influenza season for those granted these exemptions.’

The Immunisation Coalition also supports the development of a national standardised system of vaccination surveillance across all healthcare settings as seasonal influenza remains the leading cause of annual vaccine-preventable disease, associated hospitalisation and death in Australia.<sup>2</sup> The immunisation of HCWs plays a significant role in preventing transmission in healthcare settings.

The World Health Organization, the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, US Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices, and the Australian Immunisation Handbook actively recommend annual influenza immunisation of HCWs.



## MEDIA RELEASE **for immediate release**

The Immunisation Coalitions mission is to reduce the public health impact of influenza in Australia. Non-immunised HCWs put themselves and their patients at risk. The Immunisation Coalition recommends for everyone older than 6 months to get vaccinated.

For more information please visit: [www.immunisationcoalition.org.au](http://www.immunisationcoalition.org.au)

Or join the conversation at <https://www.facebook.com/immunisationcoalition/> and Twitter <https://twitter.com/immunisationgap>

###

### **MEDIA CONTACT:**

Immunisation Coalition, Kim Sampson: 03 9663 8653

Immunisation Coalition, Susanne Sperber: 03 9863 8650, Susanne [@immunisationcoalition.org.au](https://twitter.com/immunisationcoalition)

### **About Immunisation Coalition**

The Immunisation Coalition is a not for profit advocacy group with a mission to create awareness about the importance of immunisation. Immunisation still provides the best protection against infectious diseases. We work with consumers, health professionals and organisations with an interest in immunisation and government health agencies, ensuring that the information provided to consumers through our website and other communication channels is current, easily understood and scientifically informed.

1, Seale H, Raina MacIntyre C. Seasonal Influenza Vaccination in Australian hospital health care workers: a review. *Med J Aust* 2011; 195(6): 336–8. doi:10.5694/mja11.10067

2, Chiu C, Dey A, Wang H, Menzies R, Deeks S, Mahajan D, et al. Vaccine preventable diseases in Australia, 2005---2007. *Commun DisIntell* 2010; 34: S1-167