

Immunization and Vaccination Policy Promotion Project

# A Life Course Approach to Immunization and Vaccination Policy – Five Perspectives and Recommended Actions

Health and Global Policy Institute (HGPI)

## **Perspective 1 – Immunization and vaccination policies based on a life course approach should be advanced.**

1. Eligibility requirements for routine vaccinations should be expanded to cover people with certain underlying medical conditions and risk factors so high-risk individuals can receive the benefits of vaccination.
2. Special measures should be taken that expand catch-up vaccinations among unvaccinated people or people who have lived abroad and that reduce the cost burden on people who receive catch-up vaccinations.
3. To improve access, more facilities should be allowed to provide vaccinations.
4. Steps to offset the cost burden of vaccinations should be considered. These may include establishing progressive out-of-pocket payment rates by income bracket, granting public health insurance coverage, or revising the medical service fee schedule.
5. Methods of managing individual vaccination records should be reviewed, individual vaccination records over the life course should be made viewable, and those records should be sharable among municipalities.

## **Perspective 2 – Dissemination, awareness-building, and communication strategies that target healthcare professionals and the public should be created.**

1. Departments responsible for science and risk communication should be established, and efforts should be made to promote the dissemination of and awareness-building for immunizations and vaccinations by providing appropriate information at appropriate times.
2. Training systems should be introduced and best practices should be shared with the goal of improving awareness and literacy among healthcare professionals.

## **Perspective 3 – To achieve science-based policy decision making and evaluation, steps should be taken to promote the creation of a system that analyzes and shares the epidemiological effects of vaccinations by linking vaccination practices with information systems that track outbreaks of targeted diseases.**

1. The systems for gathering information and managing vaccination ledgers should be revised and a joint platform that is useful to healthcare professionals and municipalities, who are the parties responsible for entering registry information, should be built.
2. An information registration system for accurately recording individual vaccination histories and that makes effective use of medical IDs and other such tools should be built.
3. Steps should be taken to make information on adverse events viewable by revising the information utilization system for evaluating vaccine effectiveness and safety.
4. A unified evaluation system for the collection and analysis of adverse event information should be built.

## **Perspective 4 – Steps should be taken to create a system that enables multi-stakeholders to hold continuous discussions on vaccine policy.**

1. The public and specialist organizations should be invited to participate in efforts to foster social consensus.
2. Protective measures should be developed to guard against biased, alarmist disinformation or medical misinformation.

## **Perspective 5 – Investments should be accelerated in immunization policies that address both non-emergency and emergency situations and anticipate future vaccine demand.**

1. Special approval processes that reflect the significance of vaccination during public health crises must be established. A system that remains operational during non-emergencies must be built for distributing vaccines, selecting targeted groups for vaccination, and assigning vaccination priorities.
2. A domestic R&D and provision system for vaccines must be established.

#### **Perspective 4 – Steps should be taken to create a system that enables multi-stakeholders to hold continuous discussions on vaccine policy.**

To advance initiatives based on Perspectives 1 to 3 above, public understanding and consensus regarding the effectiveness and safety of immunization and vaccination will be essential. It is important that effectiveness is evaluated from multiple perspectives. In addition to benefits such as reduced disease incidence and mortality, the impact vaccines have on health by preventing severe cases and the benefits they have on the economy and society must also be considered. Another reason the value of vaccines must be measured with multiple criteria is because vaccination over the life course carries significant benefits in terms of allowing people to maintain social activities. For example, people who can maintain Activities of Daily Living (ADL) can keep working or caring for family members. While clearly defining the Government's role in protecting the lives and health of the public, correct understanding and awareness must be fostered at the individual level to create a society in which people can make decisions based on scientific evidence. Achieving this will require the two efforts described below.

##### **1. The public and specialist organizations should be invited to participate in efforts to foster social consensus.**

Building social consensus is essential for advancing immunization policy. Building common understanding takes time. In addition, to build a system for information management, to educate and build awareness among healthcare professionals, and to implement communication strategies as discussed in Perspective 2, it will be necessary to first create a system that enables the national Government, local governments, relevant academic societies, and other specialist organizations to engage in continuous discussions on immunization and vaccination policy. When defining the role of vaccination over the life course in Japan, there are certain expectations that must be placed on the public. These include being partially responsible for communication strategies and being involved in designing systems. To achieve this, it is desirable that a system is established for continuous multi-stakeholder discussions with long-term perspectives.

##### **2. Protective measures should be developed to guard against biased, alarmist disinformation or medical misinformation.**

The spread of disinformation or medical misinformation regarding vaccination throughout society carries the risk of increased vaccine hesitancy and may cause significant loss. Defensive measures are needed to prevent such information from being amplified. To help achieve that, the Government is expected to share up-to-date, easy-to-understand information and healthcare professionals are expected to promote public understanding by providing careful explanations in care settings. The media and the public are also expected to play certain roles. Anticipation is high for progress on a system for providing information to the media, the creation of guidelines on terminology and expressions for the media, and third-party evaluation of news report content. In addition, to broadly disseminate knowledge regarding vaccines, elementary and junior high school students should be taught about vaccine effectiveness and safety as part of compulsory education, while adolescents and older students should be taught about these subjects during civic education.

