



HGPI

Health and Global Policy Institute

Immunization and Vaccination Policy Promotion Project

Recommendations on Structuring Communication Strategies for Better Understanding of Immunization and Vaccination Policy

Health and Global Policy Institute (HGPI)

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Introduction

About Health and Global Policy Institute (HGPI)

Health and Global Policy Institute (HGPI) is a Tokyo-based independent and non-profit health policy think tank established in 2004. Since our establishment, HGPI has been working to help citizens shape health policy by generating policy options and bringing together stakeholders as a non-partisan think-tank. Our mission is to enhance the civic mind along with individuals' well-being and to foster sustainable, healthy communities by shaping ideas and values, reaching out to global needs, and catalyzing society for impact. We commit to activities that bring together relevant players from various fields to deliver innovative and practical solutions and to help interested citizens understand available options and their benefits from broader, global, long-term perspectives.

The importance of communication in immunization and vaccination policy and current circumstances

Immunizations and vaccines have been called “the greatest invention in the history of medicine,” and in the context of infectious disease control, they are considered the most cost-effective public health intervention. The Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic has allowed people in Japan and around the world to reaffirm the value of immunizations and vaccines. In terms of public health and wellness, in addition to protecting individuals, immunizations and vaccines serve to protect society by protecting groups that include those who have not been or cannot be vaccinated as well as members of future generations. In socioeconomic terms, immunizations and vaccines can help protect people from severe socioeconomic impacts in the event of an infectious disease epidemic. In particular, COVID-19 has damaged public health, upset familiar lifestyles, and hindered socioeconomic activities. It has spurred global action to improve vaccine research, development, and production systems as part of each country's security, or more specifically, to ensure health security in line with the protections provided by Article 25 of the Constitution of Japan, which guarantees the “right to maintain the minimum standards of wholesome and cultured living.”

Immunization and vaccination policies are essential for protecting public health and safety and for securing socioeconomic activities against the threat of Vaccine Preventable Diseases (VPDs). As a public health intervention with a long-established history that serves as a means of primary prevention against infectious diseases, vaccines are a crucial topic that must be included in discussions on reinforcing the primary care system and the family doctor system in the future.

Among life stages including infancy, early childhood, childhood, puberty, adolescence, adulthood, and old age, Japan's immunization and vaccination policies have centered on infancy, early childhood, and childhood. These policies have contributed to better health and quality of life for the public. However, in a society with a declining birthrate and an aging population, immunization and

vaccination policies that are based on each person's life course and that encompass perspectives beyond infancy, childhood, and adolescence are becoming increasingly important.

While changes in social conditions like these or due to the aggregation of knowledge are within the scope of expectations, there is also the presumption that such changes will be addressed through periodic reviews of policies to respond to them, as stipulated by Article 3, Paragraph 3 of the Immunization Act. In reality, however, the COVID-19 pandemic is impeding efforts to establish the Basic Plan on Immunization in order to promote comprehensive, systematic measures for immunization.

Based on recent experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic, advice from the "Expert Meeting on Novel Coronavirus Disease Control," and past discussions and verification studies, measures to be taken to control future infectious disease outbreaks outlined by Prime Minister Kishida include providing a legal basis for the national and local governments to secure medical resources, establishing the "Infectious Disease Crisis Management Agency" (tentative name) in the Cabinet Office to serve as a central command tower, and creating a "Department for Infectious Disease Countermeasures" (tentative name) by uniting relevant sections at the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (MHLW). These measures demonstrate that it will be necessary to create a more effective, efficient system of operations built on the foundation of immunization and vaccination policy.

The purpose of these recommendations

For routine vaccinations for children during periods of non-emergency, efforts to provide parents with the information they need to determine if a vaccination is right for them have resulted in high vaccination rates. However, due to insufficient understanding toward the ability of immunizations and vaccines to reduce the risks associated with infections or prevent infection, symptoms, or the development of severe complications, vaccination rates for voluntary vaccines like the pneumococcal vaccine for elderly people and the shingles vaccine are not high enough to be considered likely to benefit public health. There are also significant differences in the social environments surrounding each target group, which means information must be provided using methods that match those each individual uses to acquire information. Furthermore, different target groups require different vaccinations. These include catch-up vaccinations for those who went unvaccinated during childhood, adolescence, and late adulthood; providing additional vaccinations people may need over time, even for those who have completed routine vaccinations; providing necessary vaccines to exchange students, people who are dispatched abroad, and other international travelers; and responding to the needs of women of childbearing age, pregnant women, people with chronic diseases, people who are immunocompromised, and healthcare providers. Providing information in a manner that meets all of these diverse needs is by no means an easy feat.

During the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, a tendency has emerged in which people have started using social networking services (SNS) like Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram or video-sharing sites like YouTube when seeking information regarding immunizations, vaccines, and other healthcare topics. Findings from researchers around the world have been shared before they could be reviewed by specialists or undergo peer review, and conditions surrounding infection and vaccination status in each country have become widely disseminated. In the past, information crucial for protecting public health was continuously updated and provided to individuals and to society using various channels in order to alleviate people's concerns. In addition, the public has gained wide recognition toward the problematic nature of misinformation and false information. Sorting which information is important and which information should be disregarded requires a high level of expertise, which means efforts from healthcare professionals and other stakeholders who possess that expertise are needed to respond to misinformation. To address this, the World Health Organization (WHO) was early to call on the global community to mount a response based on the concept called the "Infodemic," which is a combination of "information" and "epidemic." This has reaffirmed the enormous impact of information analysis and dissemination methods when taking an vaccination-based approach to public health, in which interventions target healthy people and society.

These recommendations summarize discussions held with volunteer experts regarding the ideal communication strategies for enhancing understanding toward immunization and vaccination policy in light of the domestic and international circumstances described above.

It is well-known that there has always been information asymmetry regarding health and medicine among people with expertise in these areas, like health professionals and government officials, and people without that expertise. Communication between these parties is a key element for addressing information asymmetry. In the context of health communication and risk communication, the term "communication" is meant to refer to something that goes both ways. We must note, however, that in our series of expert discussions held for this topic, it was pointed out that persuasive communication regarding vaccines in Japan is, in many cases, not bidirectional, and that many aspects of communication during the phase for information transmission have been inadequate.

Based on the points outlined above, through these recommendations, progress in Japan's immunization and vaccination policies must be made from the perspective of communication so discussions on building systems that protect public health and socioeconomic activities against the threat of VPDs can be expanded to encompass industry, Government, academia, and civil society and so concrete measures can be implemented.

In June 2021, HGPI presented, “A Life Course Approach to Immunization and Vaccination Policy – Five Perspectives and Recommended Actions,” which was based on discussions held in FY2020 as part of our Immunization and Vaccination Project. These recommendations were created as an FY2022 initiative undertaken in accordance with those five perspectives.

Executive Summary

1 Essential conditions for communication

Important conditions and items to reaffirm before engaging in discussions on communication issues

- The importance of organizing issues in communication
- Taking underlying social and cultural factors into account is a key condition for communication

2 The basis for information transmission

Ensuring information reaches those who are uninterested

- The need for concentrated efforts to reach uninterested people and similar segments of the population

Information transmission channels

- Information transmission channels that are expected to play larger roles in the future and their inherent challenges

Stakeholder literacy

- Where channels exist, but with literacy issues among certain stakeholders

Methods of transmitting information and content

- The need to exercise more ingenuity for information transmission methods and content

3 Making information transmission more sophisticated

Stakeholder cooperation and collaboration

- Collaboration and cooperation among different stakeholders that surpass individual stakeholders

Building frameworks with the perspective of achieving even more sophisticated communication

- Past efforts to build frameworks from various differing perspectives

4 Two-way communication

Achieving communication that goes both ways

- Achieving mutual communication to make it easier for citizens to seek consultations

5 Necessary steps for new policy formation

Communication for new policy formation

- The need for more effective communication that maximizes on past experiences and is based on a clear understanding of objectives
- Reinforcing support for stakeholders to whom the Basic Plan for Immunization will assign roles in communicating and sharing information

Policy Recommendations

1. Essential conditions for communication

Important conditions and items to reaffirm before engaging in discussions on communication issues

The importance of organizing issues in communication

- Various issues related to emergency infectious disease control that had previously gone unrecognized were given media coverage during the COVID-19 pandemic, and that coverage was provided through new forms of media in addition to existing ones. One issue was the fact that public health centers did not have systems for implementing follow-up surveys and other responses in place due to scaled-back budgets and operations. Another issue raised was quarantining and other measures for travel between countries implemented at international points of entry. These issues demonstrated that when engaging in communication, it is extremely important that both the provider and recipient begin by sharing issues.
- Implementing measures for infectious disease control in an efficient manner means it is important to clearly indicate key items for maintaining the functions of society while protecting public health, and to discuss the order of priorities after sharing those items. For example, before the COVID-19 vaccine rollout, a key action taken by the Government was establishing the clear goal of achieving a vaccination rate of 80% before taking action. Doing so enabled each stakeholder to collaborate toward that goal. In addition to sharing objectives, in order to build public understanding toward how policies will be executed, it was necessary to communicate correct information through various forms of media centered around newspapers and television. When attempting to do so, one issue that emerged was achieving smooth cooperation with parties like health professionals and the administration.
- Challenges facing decision-making include identifying what information the public requires, identifying which problems have emerged, and determining priorities for solutions and action. In other words, we must remind ourselves that it is necessary to determine a suitable order of priorities for items to be communicated and to carry out that communication according to plan. This is a key condition to meet before considering a communication strategy.

Taking underlying social and cultural factors into account is a key condition for communication

- The right to self-determination is recognized in modern public health, so it is necessary to engage in communication in a manner that helps each citizen recognize the risks and benefits on their own terms and make their own decisions whether to get vaccinated. There is information asymmetry in healthcare, and interventions from specialists in stronger positions can impede on the wishes of patients in weaker positions if specialists make decisions on the grounds that the intervention in question is in the patient's best interest. When this sort of decision-making occurs, it is called "paternalism." It will be important to adopt attitudes that are in line with modern

views on self-determination.

- Meanwhile, other countries have attempted to encourage behavioral change by imposing regulations, or have introduced nudge efforts to propose and encourage behavioral changes as a method of influencing behavior and decision-making among groups or individuals.
- Regardless of which method is adopted, it will be important to use communication strategies that match each society or culture that matches the individual's sense of belonging on the national, societal, community, or family level while respecting their right to self-determination.

2. The basis for information transmission

Ensuring information reaches those who are uninterested

The need for concentrated efforts to reach uninterested people and similar segments of the population

- The groups who voluntarily make efforts to access information on immunizations and vaccines are limited to people with an interest in those topics, so separate actions must be taken to reach indifferent segments of the population, such as people who are too busy to devote the necessary attention. In modern society, where people already have so many choices and decisions to make on various issues, it is extremely difficult to attract interest in topics like immunizations and vaccines.
- Civil society organizations and similar groups are adept at addressing issues which are of public interest but go unaddressed by public institutions. They do so by initially focusing on small target audiences, such as specific individuals or groups, then gradually spreading awareness among users of social networks like Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram. These efforts are based on a "start small from the bottom-up" approach. However, it is known that such an approach is not always effective at engaging uninterested groups. Instead, to reach uninterested people, information must also be disseminated in a top-down, comprehensive manner, and effective and efficient frameworks for doing so must be established.
- For example, effective methods of drawing in those who are uninterested might include creating opportunities for people to learn immunization- and vaccination-related information through community activities, or applying concepts from the field of marketing to gain a better understanding of target groups.

Information transmission channels

Information transmission channels that are expected to play larger roles in the future and their inherent challenges

Healthcare professionals and related parties

- Individual healthcare professionals: The potential for individual healthcare professionals to serve as a form of media or a channel for communicating information has been underestimated. More attention should be paid to this and other capacities in the future.
- Pharmacists and family clinics: Among healthcare professionals and related parties, pharmacists and family clinics are not being utilized effectively. Pharmacists and family clinics provide access to the people who require information the most, and they are the places that those who seek information are most willing to spend the time needed to obtain it.
- Inherent challenges: Hospitals are seen as places for treating the ill, which makes some physicians feel like they are given a sales pitch when they actively approach healthy people to discuss vaccines. They are particularly concerned that encouraging people to get voluntary vaccinations, like the shingles vaccine, may give the impression they are trying to increase revenue. From this perspective, we can conclude that information should be delivered through various channels other than healthcare professionals.

Civil society, industry, and similar parties

- In the past, the MHLW website lacked sufficient information when it was still under development, and it is difficult for industry to provide vaccine-related information. The KNOW VPD! Protect Our Children organization was established in recognition of the problem that the general public did not have a resource for information on vaccinations.
- As mentioned before, during the rollout of the COVID-19 vaccines, information was provided in a very effective manner thanks to strong leadership from the Minister of State for Special Missions of the Cabinet Office, who was in charge of COVID-19 vaccinations. However, in general, there are few areas where companies can currently contribute to providing information regarding vaccinations. In other words, due to issues like diminished interest caused by past experiences with the HPV vaccine and regulations faced by companies, such as notices issued under the “Standard for Adequate Advertisement of Pharmaceutical Products,” companies have become reluctant to disseminate information (including through advertisements). It may become easier for companies to take action if the Government clearly outlines how they can contribute.

Literacy among stakeholders

Where channels exist, but with literacy issues for certain stakeholders

The media

- Media organizations do not provide internal education on vaccines or training on how to present scientific or medical information in an evidence-based manner.
- However, the media did play a certain role in communicating vaccine information during the COVID-19 pandemic. This is because agile, flexible organizations like COV-Navi were established

and started a movement in which specialists came together to discuss vaccines. Media representatives who participated in the study sessions hosted by such organizations were then able to communicate information that was based on their newly-obtained scientific knowledge. In the future, in situations where it seems that strong opposition toward a vaccine will emerge and bring a vaccination program to a standstill, as seen with the HPV vaccine, it will be important for the media to be able to recognize when that opposition is wrong. Those within the media should recognize the importance of learning and we must create learning opportunities in which more people can participate.

- As seen with the HPV vaccine, there is the chance that a negative assessment will strongly influence public opinion once it is featured in the media. Furthermore, the mass media is sometimes subject to criticism over minor issues, and this can have significant impacts on how they assess vaccines. Cooperation from the mass media is essential, but because mass media can be swallowed up by public opinion, it should be noted that there are limits as to what can be accomplished only by improving literacy.

Guardians

- Even among guardians whose children have been vaccinated, some people have a certain degree of lingering concern because they have not been able to ask health professionals about their minor doubts. This means there have been cases of vaccine hesitancy or in which people got swept up in the thinking of vaccine deniers when outspoken voices in opposition to vaccines became a part of public discourse. For members of the general public who become guardians without past opportunities to learn about immunization, it is only natural to have misgivings. The creation of learning opportunities must be prioritized.

Healthcare professionals

- The Strategic Advisory Group of Experts on Immunization (SAGE) Working Group on Vaccine Hesitancy established by the WHO has advocated the “3C model” to describe elements that influence the decision to vaccinate. The 3Cs are “confidence” or trust; “complacency,” which measures contentment or the idea that one will not get infected and therefore will not need a vaccine; and “convenience,” which denotes ease of use. The latest findings regarding vaccine hesitancy suggest that the most important question is how to increase confidence. Key elements for increasing confidence are healthcare professionals transmitting information to vaccine recipients and individual healthcare providers possessing sufficient education and awareness.
- At the same time, it has been pointed out that the proportion of medical students, nursing students, and even professional nurses who can accurately explain adverse events and adverse reactions is low. Because there are few opportunities to learn about immunizations and vaccines in a systematic manner in Japan, we should also consider the possibility of reexamining educational content.

- Another item that must be taken into consideration is that there are regional disparities in the distribution of medical resources. While major metropolitan areas have many clinics specializing in pediatrics, there are fewer such clinics in rural areas. Instead, many of the residents in those areas visit clinics specializing in internal medicine/pediatrics or similar facilities. Based on these circumstances, it will be necessary to provide education on vaccinations in a manner that cuts across medical specialties to reach internists and other physicians.

Specialists other than healthcare professionals

- Groups like the MHLW's vaccine subcommittee have started broadcasting their study meetings and other events on video distribution services like YouTube, which has improved transparency in decision-making. On the other hand, there are times when only portions of the comments made by experts at those committees are picked up and publicized in a manner that changes the nature of what they said or that communicates a different message than what they originally intended. Due to issues like this that occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic, there were times when opposition to vaccines was strengthened due to those statements being misinterpreted. Members who serve on those committees may require opportunities to receive training from communication specialists to prevent such issues.

• **Methods of transmitting information and content**

The need to exercise more ingenuity for information transmission methods and content

Efforts for meeting the needs of various target groups

Responding to elderly people

- Pneumococcal vaccine is one of the most important vaccines for older adults to receive. To increase the vaccination rate, its importance and effects must be clearly presented. Regarding methods of doing so, efforts like those described below may be necessary.
- Elderly people are less likely to have internet access, so a multi-layered approach that includes television, newspapers, and local communities will be necessary.
- It would also be effective to put up posters in healthcare institutions across Japan. Healthcare institutions are a form of media.
- When designing communication strategies, it is important to select forms of media that match target groups and incorporate methods of measuring effectiveness at generating final outcomes (such as increased coverage among elderly people). For example, sufficient examination will be necessary to determine if it is effective to provide recommendations for pneumococcal vaccines and shingles vaccines in clinics used by many elderly people. The outcomes of different options should be compared and verified. For example, outcomes in facilities that only put up posters should be compared to those that put up posters and have physicians mention vaccines to patients. After verification, the most effective option should

be selected.

Other age groups

- It may be worth considering adopting new communication methods that differ from conventional ones. For example, approaches based on social networks and schools may be effective for providing information to girls in grades six through ten, who are in the target group for HPV vaccination.
- A press seminar on the shingles vaccine for the working-age population was well-received. The fifth round of rubella vaccinations has yet to increase the vaccination rate, but it may be an easy topic to cover in the media because it targets the working-age population. The use of various channels according to objective and target group should be considered.

More general efforts

- A specialist in behavioral economics who participated in deliberations on the COVID-19 vaccine expressed the opinion that, “The volume of information people have to process should be kept minimal, and they should have to make fewer choices.” Despite that opinion, the MHLW website currently contains a large amount of information, and it is difficult to select information from it. Further efforts should be made to develop mechanisms to guide citizens, such as making vaccine guidelines more readable and easier to understand.
- A certain initiative found that by using a schedule chart called the “Vaccination Scheduler” which displayed voluntary and routine vaccinations together in order, it was possible to communicate that there are no relative merits between routine and voluntary vaccinations, and that there is a preferable order in which to vaccinate. This finding suggests that going beyond explaining vaccines in words may help increase coverage.
- Because feelings of hesitancy grow stronger when vaccines are put at the forefront, a certain project has adopted messaging like “Let’s make our city a place that’s resilient against infectious diseases,” or “Let’s all do what we can to increase antibodies in our city.” Adopting these sorts of phrases led to a dramatic increase in the number of municipal governments and neighborhood associations cooperating in the project.
- Meanwhile, for the HPV vaccine, the Japan Society of Obstetrics and Gynecology issued a request to the MHLW that its active recommendation be resumed. In addition to petitioning the MHLW, it may have also been important to make efforts to expand understanding by explaining the vaccine’s safety to healthcare institutions and other stakeholders.

3. Making information transmission more sophisticated

Stakeholder cooperation and collaboration

Collaboration and cooperation among different stakeholders that surpass individual stakeholders

Collaboration between the mass media and social media

- While the pros and cons of vaccines are communicated in the mass media and on social media, information regarding the negative elements is conveyed more quickly and with broader reach on social media. Cooperation and collaboration among mass media and social media is an issue that must be addressed to eliminate this distortion. For example, it will be important to check whether the information or discourse being reported and spread throughout society is based on fact, to publish articles on this process, and to conduct fact checks as initiatives for sharing accurate information with people. It will also be important to cooperate with specialists on the regulations in each media or how policies operate.
- Similarly, if a piece that is critical of vaccines is published by the mass media, it incites a reaction from people known as “health supporters” or “science supporters,” who prefer paternalism, and only information regarding vaccine denial ends up being disseminated as a result. This means measures must also be taken to ensure that the environment on social media is connected to what is actually being reported by the mass media.

Collaboration between the mass media and specialists

- As previously discussed, there are no internal mechanisms at media organizations for providing training on scientific or medical information. To help address this, study sessions for members of the media have been hosted by the National Institute of Infectious Diseases (NIID). KNOW VPD! Protect our Children has hosted similar workshops for people in the media that provided basic knowledge regarding immunizations on topics like the differences between voluntary and routine vaccinations or the distinction between adverse reactions and adverse events. It will be important to provide regular opportunities like these so infectious disease experts can communicate with reporters.
- During opportunities for opinion exchange with members of the media like those mentioned above, it is important to keep in mind that the purpose is not to enlighten people from the media. What is important is starting conversations by having members of the media share their questions.
- When it appears vaccine opposition is likely to increase, it is also necessary to share questions early on to identify which discussion points are causing a mismatch in understanding among specialists and the media and to foster common understanding among them. This sort of response is being taken by the Science Media Centre in the U.K. There is also a domestic initiative called the Science Media Centre of Japan which works to rapidly provide opinions from specialists on social events that are closely related to science.

Collaboration between government agencies and specialists

- When a certain municipality was creating publicity materials for children’s vaccinations, they

held focus group interviews in advance with guardians who were concerned about vaccinations. The content of those interviews was analyzed by a specialist in risk communication, and the underlying nature of their concerns was used as a reference when deciding how to conduct the publicity campaign. In this manner, it is important to deepen mutual understanding through communication strategies that utilize focus group interviews involving specialists to fill in each gap as it emerges.

- While it takes time for evidence presented by the MHLW and other such information to complete formal procedures and reach local governments, that information is being handled in a smooth manner when public health nurses and physicians at clinics in each community convey it to local governments. Smooth communication is also happening in each prefecture and region where schools of medicine, nursing, and other medicine-related universities have formed networks. This is likely to be because specialists who are close to each community stakeholder have established trusting relationships and can convey the evidence in plain terms.

Splitting duties among government agencies

- When disseminating information through Q&As, the MHLW must provide comprehensive information, but a certain local government attracted attention for providing information in a concise manner on its website. For example, one item said, “Q. I heard that a rat given the vaccine died after two years,” and “A. The lifespan of rats is two years.” As this example demonstrates, dividing information dissemination duties among the central Government and basic local governments while taking proximity to target groups into consideration is likely to be effective.

Building frameworks with the perspective of achieving even more sophisticated communication

Past efforts to build frameworks from various differing perspectives

- In Japan, information regarding immunizations and vaccines for infants is usually provided after childbirth. However, the busy schedules of pediatricians and other physicians often make it difficult for them to sit down with parents long enough to answer all of their questions. Outside of Japan, there are various countries where studies have confirmed it is effective to provide education regarding vaccines from early pregnancy. Japan must also consider establishing opportunities during pregnancy for providing accurate information on infant vaccinations. We need a system that provides various opportunities for midwives, nurses, obstetricians, pediatricians, and other health professionals who are in contact with parents to provide information.
- Furthermore, because all vaccination programs – for both infants and adults – are budgeted and carried out on a municipal basis, each municipality has created its own website. This makes it difficult to aggregate information. Even the central Government has yet to create a framework for providing information in a centralized manner. If a framework can be created in which basic information can first be presented in a centralized manner and shared with each municipality,

and each municipality can provide information on individual immunization programs or subsidies, it may become possible to circulate information more efficiently.

- In addition, circumstances in each community are usually different, and efforts must be premised on a recognition of this fact. Therefore, as one effort to reach communities with information provided by the MHLW or municipalities, it is desirable that a framework fitting the circumstances in that community is created which allows for coordination with universities with close ties to those communities and for approaches centered around physicians in local clinics or from health centers.

4. Two-way communication

Achieving communication that goes both ways

Achieving mutual communication to make it easier for citizens to seek consultations

- A leaflet describing possible adverse reactions and where to access consultation services is currently being distributed to people after they are vaccinated for COVID-19. One important item to note is that those leaflets include telephone numbers and say, “If you experience anything that concerns you, healthcare professionals are available 24 hours a day, so please call.”
- While referring to the Vaccine Information Statement (VIS) in the U.S., a system must be developed for providing post-vaccination consultation services for routine vaccinations, as well. Because physical and psychological access can vary depending on where consultation services are established and how, it will be important to pay sufficient attention to usability among vaccination target groups when establishing said services. Access for the public may be hindered if they are established at research institutes or non-profit organizations (NPOs), for example. If they are established at clinics, people may feel psychological hurdles toward seeking consultations when they are not experiencing any symptoms. It will be important to continuously increase the number of points of access to consultation services in communities to build trust among community members and make them easy places to visit. Efforts to create a system for providing consultations on vaccinations are currently advancing, and expectations are high for the roles to be fulfilled by vaccination centers and similar parties.
- The communication tools people use regularly are likely to vary by target group, so in the future, expectations are high for the creation of a system for effectively responding to each age group. For example, consultations could be made available over LINE for younger people and over telephone for elderly people.

5. Necessary steps for new policy formation

Communication for new policy formation

The need for more effective communication that maximizes on past experiences and is based on a clear understanding of objectives

- Deliberation councils and examination committees for COVID-19 countermeasures incorporated

conflicting views from two different perspectives: reducing burdens on the healthcare provision system and maintaining economic activities. As part of that conflict, it cannot be denied that problems facing the vaccine rollout were influenced by issues rooted in differences in values among generations or individuals. Diverse values exist in modern society, and it is no easy task to reconcile differences in how people perceive risks or benefits to society or to individuals. Therefore, even for communication strategies for COVID-19, which have gradually improved with time, there are still gaps that have yet to be bridged between each person's ideas or positions. Engaging in more careful communication to gain as much acceptance as possible while noting the presence of such division and maintaining a recognition that these differences will be difficult to address will not only be a challenge among individuals, but will also be an essential element for policy formation in society.

- For the HPV vaccine, it is effective to utilize communication strategies to present convincing scientific evidence to individuals who are members of the target group, to promote understanding toward the need to vaccinate, and to gradually work to change policy. It is likely that such methods can also contribute to increasing vaccination rates. If existing policies are not in line with our vision for a better society, it is crucial that those serving in the field of public health work to alter policies to match that vision. To accomplish this, under the premise that we will involve the media, healthcare professionals, and similar parties and that we will consult with the legislature while working to change policy, we must build a system for considering ideal forms of communication.

Reinforcing support for stakeholders to whom the Basic Plan for Immunization will assign roles in communicating and sharing information

- The Basic Plan for Immunization outlines the roles of the national Government, municipalities, healthcare professionals, vaccinated people and their guardians, and other related parties. It will be important to bring diverse stakeholders together and hold continuous discussions confirming whether this matches the circumstances that exist in society today and if it is operating in an effective and efficient manner. While doing so, we must also take measures to provide the resources needed for those discussions and work to ensure the plan is carried out effectively.

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These recommendations were compiled based on working group meetings, expert hearings, and related meetings hosted by the HGPI Immunization and Vaccination Policy Promotion Project in FY2021, as well as on discussions held under the Chatham House Rule and policy trends and other developments in this area as of June 30, 2022.

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