

# The Life Course Immunisation Initiative

Confederation of Meningitis Organisations



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## Case Study

### Background

Anyone can contract meningitis and septicaemia, therefore everyone has the right to access prevention and treatment. This is one of the guiding principles of the Confederation of Meningitis Organisations (CoMO), and the reason we embarked upon the Life Course Immunisation initiative. This is an initiative that focuses on promoting vaccination across the life span from babyhood to old age.

Belief persists that infectious diseases are a phenomenon of childhood, however diseases such as meningococcal meningitis and septicaemia, pneumococcal meningitis and pneumonia, and viral infections such as mumps and measles place a significant burden on individuals of all ages. Thus, maintaining high immunisation rates across all age groups is essential to protect the population, and while childhood vaccination is well recognised, adult vaccination remains an underused public health strategy.

There may be a number of reasons for this lack of recognition, for example limited awareness of infectious diseases and vaccinations in the population for older age groups; gaps in the promotion of adult vaccination by public health authorities; limited leadership from healthcare professionals in recommending vaccinations; lack of uptake due to limited reimbursement and inconsistent monitoring and surveillance systems. Irrespective of the possible reasons, evidence shows<sup>1</sup> that people are living longer and with living longer comes an increasing reliance on healthcare services. There is also a proven cost-effective benefit to

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<sup>1</sup> European Commission (2014) 'Population Ageing in Europe' [Online]. Available at: [https://ec.europa.eu/research/social-sciences/pdf/policy\\_reviews/kina26426enc.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/research/social-sciences/pdf/policy_reviews/kina26426enc.pdf) (Accessed: 23/06/2017).

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vaccinating older age groups against vaccine-preventable diseases, such as meningitis, pneumonia and shingles<sup>2</sup>.

## Relevance

The Life Course Immunisation initiative operates at a European level to influence policy decisions that will in turn affect member states in the field of vaccination throughout life, thus creating a higher level of public health for EU citizens through the increased availability of essential vaccines. The initiative also works towards an increased confidence in vaccination in member states.

## Calls to action

The WHO first recognised this need for a life course approach to vaccination in their 2011-2020 Global Vaccine Action Plan (GVAP). The 94 Member States of the Sixty-fifth World Health Assembly endorsed the GVAP as the framework for implementation of its vision of a Decade of Vaccines. The Assembly requested WHO regional offices to translate GVAP into regional plans, and WHO Europe responded with the “European Vaccine Action Plan 2015–2020” (EVAP) plan.

In November 2013 a partnership of experts (SAATI, Supporting Active Aging through Immunisation), of which CoMO was a founding member, launched a report that called for immunisation as a prevention strategy to be part of an age-based health approach throughout all phases of life for European citizens<sup>3</sup>.

In December 2014 the European Council under the leadership of the Italian Presidency published its conclusions on vaccinations as an effective tool in public health,<sup>4</sup> where it invited the Member States to consider immunization beyond infancy and early childhood by

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<sup>2</sup> Alliance for Aging Research (2015) 'Our Best Shot: Expanding Prevention through Vaccination in Older Adults'. [Online]. Available at: <http://www.agingresearch.org/Publications/view/132%20-%20VciRyHFViko#.WU0pxuzyu70> (Accessed: 23/06/2017).

<sup>3</sup> ILC-UK (2013) 'Adult vaccination - a key component of healthy ageing', [Online]. Available at: [http://www.ilcuk.org.uk/index.php/publications/publication\\_details/adult\\_vaccination\\_a\\_key\\_component\\_of\\_healthy\\_ageing](http://www.ilcuk.org.uk/index.php/publications/publication_details/adult_vaccination_a_key_component_of_healthy_ageing) (Accessed: 23/06/2017).

<sup>4</sup> Council of the European Union (2014) 'Council conclusions on vaccinations as an effective tool in public health', [Online]. Available at: [http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms\\_data/docs/pressdata/en/lisa/145973.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/lisa/145973.pdf) (Accessed: 23/06/2017).

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creating vaccination programmes with life-long approach. It also invited the Commission and the Member States to encourage advocacy and stakeholder participation.

Despite these previous calls to action, advocacy in the area of communicable diseases is still sadly lacking within the European Community, therefore encouragement and support for public health vaccination advocacy is urgently required.

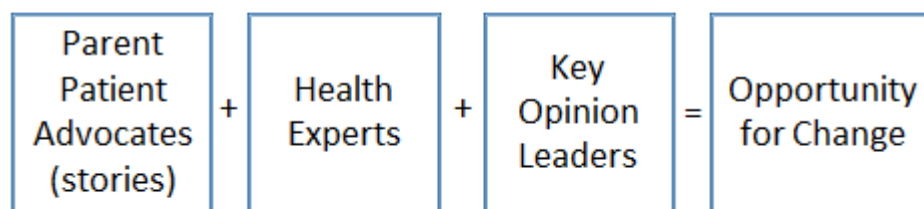
## Action Proposed

In order to address the gaps in immunisation across the life course, it was clear that multi-level change was needed. Given the limited health competencies of the European Commission, change was needed at a Member State level; however without recommendations from the EU, it seemed unlikely that Member States would individually act upon the need.

A resolution within the European Parliament was identified by CoMO members at a CoMO regional conference when discussing a collective approach to vaccination advocacy, as the first step towards greater European activity, followed by a potential Joint Action on immunisation as a more powerful tool.

CoMO has also found over the years that successful advocacy campaigns require multiple stakeholders. One of the cornerstones of CoMO activity is vertical advocacy, which CoMO terms The Change Equation:

## CoMO Change Equation



*A collective effort*

In this instance, this translated to the need for the involvement and support of patient groups, experts in the fields of vaccination and infectious diseases, and key individuals involved in health policy.

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## Intersectional collaboration

Including experts from around the world from industry, patient organisations, health experts and key opinion leaders is key to the LCI initiative. Each group is invited to participate in discussions and workshops to ensure that there is the greatest chance of success. **The Change Equation**, shown above, is a method we have shown to be effective in the past when influencing policy decisions.

## Aims

1. To bring together stakeholders active in the principles of Life Course Immunisation (LCI)
2. To raise the profile for LCI as a European priority
3. To encourage and support the development of European policy to move towards implementation of LCI in member states

## Methodology

In order to achieve the aims set out, the following strategy was developed:

**Step 1:** Launch of the Campaign

**Step 2:** Identify and approach initial key stakeholders

**Step 3:** Begin campaign for European Policy change

**Step 4:** Grow support base and increase efforts behind policy change

**Step 5:** Consolidate support base into a well-recognised team of experts

### **Step 1: Launch of the Campaign:**

The CoMO Life Course Immunisation initiative was launched on World Meningitis Day April 2015. This fell during the WHO European Immunisation Week, the theme of which was the need for renewed commitment to immunisation at political, professional and personal levels.

CoMO's first action was to support a written declaration<sup>5</sup> on vaccine campaigns in the

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<sup>5</sup> European Parliament (2015) 'Written Declaration', [Online]. Available at: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-%2f%2fEP%2f%2fNONSGML%2bWDECL%2bP8-DCL-2015-0032%2b0%2bDOC%2bPDF%2bV0%2f%2fEN> (Accessed: 23/06/2017).

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European Parliament, the written declaration called upon the commission to implement the Council Conclusions on vaccinations as an effective public health tool, to promote the European Vaccine Action Plan 2015/2020 and to raise awareness of the benefits of a preventive approach to the health of European citizens, while safeguarding freedom of choice in the administration of vaccines not legally required in the Member States.

In addition, a section was created on the CoMO website dedicated to the LCI initiative, to provide updates to external stakeholders. Regular social media updates on the subject also began at this point and still continue, to keep stakeholders up to date on activities and potential opportunities for involvement or collaboration.

## Step 2: Identify and approach initial key stakeholders:

**Life-Course Vaccination: From Babyhood to Healthy Ageing**

Confederation of Meningitis Organisations (CoMO)

Authors: Kevic Humphries, Sam Kazaman, Daphne Holt, Bruce Langgulant and Chris Hoed.

The Confederation of Meningitis Organisations (CoMO) is an international member organisation working to reduce the incidence and impact of meningitis worldwide. CoMO brings people together from more than 25 countries to help prevent meningitis through awareness raising, advocacy work and creating a supportive network for our members. We currently have 55 members from three regions – Europe-Africa, Asia Pacific and The Americas.

The Life-Course Immunisation Initiative (LCI) is a project that advocates for vaccinations for all ages across the world in order to maximise the protection of populations against vaccine-preventable diseases, such as meningitis. CoMO is collaborating with the International Federation on Ageing and the University of Leeds, in recognising the medical and financial benefit to society of protecting older generations.

The CoMO Change Equation is a concept for organising policy change and is a vital part of our advocacy for life course immunisation. At CoMO we encourage parent/patient advocates, with personal experience, to work with health professionals and researchers to a realistic solution of key opinion leaders. This effort can create the opportunity for positive changes to public policy.

**CoMO Change Equation**

- Health Experts:** CoMO's Scientific Advisory Group (CSAG) is a reference group of medical experts and clinicians who advise CoMO's governing council on meningitis issues and immunisation projects.
- Key Opinion Leaders:** We organise and attend large scientific conferences and other meetings in order to connect with key individuals and organisations who are leaders in fields relating to meningitis, epidemiology and vaccines. CoMO also advocates with policy makers for change.
- Parent/Patient Advocates:** We are the voice for individuals all over the world that have been affected by meningitis.

Locations mentioned on the map: Ondra, 22 months, Czech Republic; Charles, 2, South Africa; JeongJun, 10, South Korea; Jamie, 20, USA; Tania, 40, New Zealand.

Opportunity for Change by Working Together

It is our goal to prevent meningitis worldwide because we can and we should

To learn more scan the QR code above or contact:  
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 UK: Daphne Holt [daphne.holt@co-mo.org](mailto:daphne.holt@co-mo.org)  
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[www.cocomo.org](http://www.cocomo.org)  
[www.facebook.com/ConfederationOfMeningitisOrganisations](https://www.facebook.com/ConfederationOfMeningitisOrganisations)  
[@CoMOMeningitis](https://twitter.com/CoMOMeningitis)



**Pictured above:** From left- Natalie Heritage and Dr Daphne Holt, CoMO and Mrs Julie Girling, MEP, discussing LCI

CoMO began a dialogue with local MEP, Mrs Julie Girling, Conservative MEP for the South West and Gibraltar, and member of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (ENVI), who was willing to support the LCI initiative and who gave recommendations on approaches to influence political decision making.

**Image left:** Poster presented at June 2016 IFA Conference

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**Pictured above:** Attendees from the LCI NGO Summit in Brussels

The International Federation on Ageing (IFA) were quickly identified as key allies in the field of Life Course Vaccination. CoMO joined forces with the IFA to organise an NGO Summit in Brussels in November 2015 to establish a dialogue with European NGOs and to establish partnerships with organisations not traditionally associated with the meningitis world. CoMO sought to create such connections in order to ensure that LCI was promoted to the widest audience possible. In June 2016, CoMO presented a poster (pictured above), at the IFA Global Conference as a part of our continued partnership on LCI.

## Step 3: Begin campaign for European Policy change

Following the strong support at the NGO Summit for a European approach to change<sup>6</sup> and with the support of MEP Julie Girling, CoMO arranged a European Parliamentary meeting in Brussels. This meeting brought together scientific experts, MEPs, patient groups and industry, to discuss a multi-faceted approach and a potential European Resolution<sup>7</sup>. This was an important first step in drawing together all of the key stakeholder groups to identify collective priorities.



**Pictured top:** Michael Sulzner, DG Santé, presented at EIP LCI Policy Forum



**Pictured bottom:** Delegates attend the European Parliamentary meeting

<sup>6</sup> CoMO (2015) 'THE BRUSSELS NGO SUMMIT', [Online]. Available at: <http://www.comeningitis.org/blog/2015/12/the-brussels-ngo-summit/> (Accessed: 23/06/2017).

<sup>7</sup> CoMO (2016) 'The importance of global unity against vaccine-preventable diseases', [Online]. Available at: <http://www.comeningitis.org/blog/2016/07/the-importance-of-global-unity-against-vaccine-preventable-diseases/> (Accessed: 23/06/2017).

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## Effectiveness

Influencing European level policy decisions is the most effective way to influence the policies of individual member states, who fundamentally decide on their own vaccination programmes, but take guidance from the EU. Measurement of progress can be achieved through the monitoring of activities such as meetings and workshops held on the topic, which have steadily increased since the inception of this initiative, and through the introduction of policy changes at a European and member state level, which in turn will lead to increased vaccination coverage.

### Step 4: Grow support base and increase efforts behind policy change

New key partners were identified at the European Parliamentary meeting- the European Institute of Women's Health (EIWH) and Excellence in Paediatrics (EiP). Together, it was agreed that the next meeting would be held at the EiP annual conference in December as the first policy forum on Life Course Immunisation and was to be arranged by CoMO and EIWH in partnership. Working together, we were able to reach a greater range of organisations to bring more participants into the discussion. Expert speakers gave presentations on the policies around LCI in their countries and DG Santé provided an update on overarching European policy. This forum provided an excellent context on which to base further strategic discussions.

### Step 5: Consolidate support base into a well-recognised team of experts



**Pictured above:** Topics of priority discussed at strategy workshop

Having established a committed number of organisations from different fields, CoMO and EIWH arranged a strategy workshop to draw together the discussions from the European Parliamentary meeting and the EiP Policy Forum to produce a plan for the group to develop a strong resource base prior to the proposed formation of a formal coalition of those in attendance.

The plan created at the strategy workshop is now in progress and in May 2017 the Terms of Reference for the first European coalition for Life Course Immunisation were finalised.

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Shortly after this, two members of the coalition attended a workshop to discuss plans for a Joint Action, organised by DG Santé, highlighting that those within the team are successfully gaining recognition for their work on Life Course Immunisation.

## Sustainability

The creation of a coalition ensures the sustainability of this initiative. The coalition is in its infancy but in future the plan is to create a formalised legal structure, ensuring a regulated, independent and inclusive approach to the issues faced. Since the coalition works to make positive policy changes and raise awareness of the needs of vaccination, the effects on vaccination coverage will be long-term. The coalition uses minimal resources to achieve its goals since most work carried out can be done so in situ and any materials produced are predominantly online. Once the coalition has been formalised, it should provide a sustainable platform for work on other issues around vaccination.

## Transferability

The work of the coalition is currently targeted at LCI; however in future, as priorities shift and progress is made, the structure would be easily transferable to other advocacy issues, such as specific chronic diseases or other vaccination challenges. This transferability is due to the creation of a structure group based upon **The Change Equation**. Since multiple stakeholders are involved in the initiative, learnings can be shared throughout different industries.

The inaugural meeting of the coalition is scheduled for December 2017.



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## Landmark events



## Results

**Aim 1:** Bring together stakeholders in LCI:

CoMO has successfully brought together stakeholders from industry, patient organisations, scientific experts, key opinion leaders and policy makers. The creation of a coalition, the first of its kind in Europe in this field, will enable a united approach to Life Course Immunisation.

**Aim 2:** Raise the profile for LCI as a European priority:

The LCI initiative has now been in place for two years. In that time we have seen Life Course Immunisation move steadily up the European agenda. CoMO has presented, or been invited to discuss the LCI initiative at an increasing number of conferences and workshops since its inception, with more planned for 2017.

**Aim 3:** Develop European policy to move towards implementation of LCI in member states:

Whilst we have not yet achieved the introduction of a European Resolution on LCI as we had hoped, there is now a definite move toward a Joint Action.

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## Conclusions

### **Innovation and Creativity**

Bringing together this range of stakeholders for Life Course Immunisation has not been formalised before. The involvement of patient groups means that there is an innovative 'bottom-up' approach, influencing political will through the involvement of voters.

The need for Life Course Immunisation is finally being recognised at a European level.

The initiative needs support from all key stakeholders. We have made progress through the involvement of health experts, successfully securing EU institution support and that of patient groups. There is more work to be done to secure influential political support.

The coalition is in its infancy and there is more governance to be implemented to develop a formalised structure. Despite this, members are already being recognised for their involvement in this crucial initiative and it is clear through invitations to workshops such as the most recent DG Santé talks that the coalition is finally being recognised for its influence and is now in the best position to bring about positive change.