



International
Longevity Centre UK



Stripe Partners

Moving the needle: Improving uptake of adult vaccination in Japan

Which ideas and solutions can be used to increase
immunisation rates across older adults in Japan?

ilcuk.org.uk

What happens next

About the project

- ILC aims to address the issues affecting low routine vaccination rates in over-65s in Japan
- Flu vaccine uptake in older Japanese adults is ~50%; [existing ILC research](#) suggesting only 1 in 4 people agree vaccines are safe and 9.9% agree that they are effective
- We want to identify and design solutions to help improve routine vaccine uptake

Findings so far

Our [findings from a roundtable discussion](#) with Japanese academics:

- Vaccination is *“something which you do in school”* – life-course immunisation isn’t in policy or practice yet
- Japan lacks infrastructure - *“one reason for low compliance is that the vaccine schedule is too complicated and there are no electronic reminder systems”*
- Low trust in the Japanese government – while there are *“willing doctors and health care professionals...they are inhibited by the Government not supporting them”*

Findings so far

- Cost barriers – *“Money is a barrier to adult vaccination for some people”*; *“Vaccinations need higher co-payments compared to routine services”*
- Time constraints – In Japan, vaccination is only allowed under medical license and can't be administered in pharmacies or other community settings; current clinics may not be open at a convenient time for some adults
- Cautious government – HPV vaccine litigation in Japan has led to caution about promoting vaccines due to fear of legal action
- Side effect concerns – safety is a bigger public worry than efficacy

Findings so far

- Japanese locally-driven health works better for treatment than prevention - “free visit policy” means GPs have no registration of patients; there has been little focus on promoting public health by private doctors, as people only typically come into the health system as and when they need it
- Paper-based systems are a barrier to delivering national vaccination programmes effectively - Japan has no national information infrastructure for adults; *“one of the reasons for low compliance is that the vaccine schedule is too complicated and there are no electronic reminder systems”*

Aims of the evidence review

- To understand existing practices used to help increase vaccine uptake
- To find solutions to the challenges raised in our research
- To see which ideas would work in the context of Japan and help us seek new solutions

1. Vaccines in the workplace

Problem: Vaccines are hard to access in Japan, with people only being able to get them from doctors

Potential solution: Getting vaccinated in the workplace

Example: In the UK, [Bupa](#) offers a service to private employers which allows them to provide the flu vaccine to employees, either through a qualified nurse coming into the workplace to or employees going to a pharmacy.

2. Vaccines in pharmacies

Problem: Only doctors can administer vaccines in Japan, limiting people's access to vaccines in the community

Solution: Pharmacies providing vaccines

Example: [A 2016 study](#) by US-based pharmacy chain, Walgreens, examined changes in pharmacy immunisation in three states which had recently passed legislation to allow community pharmacists to administer shingles vaccines. Uptake among over 60s increased by 745%, 377% and 803% in Massachusetts, Florida and New York respectively.

3. Using the “sharing economy” method

Problem: Some adults in Japan struggle to physically or geographically access vaccines

Solution: Digital platforms could share their services and provide access to doctors who can give people vaccines

Example: US-based healthcare transport company, Circulation, leverages ride-sharing services such as Uber and Lyft to take patients to healthcare appointments.

In October 2016, Uber also offered free, on-demand flu vaccination in more than 35 US cities.

4. Targeted communication

Problem: Japan lacks information infrastructure, making it difficult to reach people about routine vaccines

Solution: Targeted vaccine communication

Examples: [A 2012 study in Spain](#) found that those who received a personalised letter about possible complications of influenza and the effectiveness of a vaccine witnessed 4.3% greater uptake than the group who did not receive a letter.

[A 2015 study in Lebanon](#) saw a 16.5% vaccination increase among those who received a call from a nurse.

5. Mobile phone apps

Problem: Japan lacks information infrastructure, making it difficult to reach people about routine vaccines

Solution: Using mobile phone apps to track vaccine records and monitor local disease outbreaks

Example: In Canada, [the ImmunizeCA app](#) informs mothers of their children's immunisation schedules and any documented local outbreaks. 36% of users reported that they always used the app to track records; 32% claimed that the app made them more likely to ensure their children were vaccinated on time.

6. Rewards for getting vaccinated

Problem: Vaccine hesitancy is high in Japan

Solution: Reward-based incentives to encourage vaccine uptake

Examples: In Northern Ireland, all flu-vaccinated staff members were entered into a ballot to win additional holiday leave.

In the UK, the NHS used small cash incentives to increase HepB vaccine uptake, which improved adherence to vaccination programmes.

7. Using nudges to change behaviour

Problem: Vaccine hesitancy is high in Japan

Solution: Nudging people with reminders to get vaccinated

Example: [A 2015 Lebanese study](#) tested different ways to remind people about immunisation services, including texting over-65s; uptake among those who received a text in the study increased 7.2%.

8. Making vaccines mandatory

Problem: Vaccine hesitancy is high in Japan

Solution: Making vaccines mandatory to increase uptake

Examples: In [Saudi Arabia](#), employees in all sectors must be vaccinated for COVID-19 before they can return to work.

In [Italy](#) and France, healthcare workers need to be vaccinated before treating patients.

France has also [made COVID-19 vaccine passes](#)/negatives test mandatory to enter certain public spaces – vaccine bookings surged by over 1m in the first 48 hours after this change.

9. Care home vaccine policies

Problem: Only 50% of over-65s in Japan received the flu vaccine (OECD, 2017)

Solution: Care homes could create specific vaccine policies to ensure greater uptake among older adults

Example: [In Nottingham, England](#), vaccine uptake was found to be higher in care homes with a vaccination policy i.e., pneumococcal vaccine coverage was 60% and 32% in care homes with and without a vaccination policy respectively.

10. Increasing awareness in HCPs

Problem: Trust in vaccines remains low in Japan

Solution: Better awareness and uptake in healthcare professionals (HCPs) could encourage patients to take vaccines

Example: [NHS England](#) introduced a tiered financial incentive to providers based on the number of staff who got the flu vaccine – this incentive has helped to gradually increase HCP uptake.

11. Reframing vaccine narratives

Problem: Japanese Government communication on vaccines is cautious

Solution: Reframe narratives so that they encourage people to take vaccines

Example: [In the US, Rite Aid pharmacies](#) launched an advertising campaign that said: *“Get your flu shot today because 63% of your friends didn’t.”* This was designed to encourage vaccination by showing infection risk was high due to the large number of unvaccinated individuals within someone’s social sphere.

12. Interactive education campaigns

Problem: People might be hesitant to get vaccinated due to a lack of education and poor vaccine history in Japan

Solution: Gamification of vaccines to make people aware of the importance of getting vaccinated and the benefits

Examples: [POX](#) helps teach the concept of herd immunity as the player tries to stop an outbreak by vaccinating people.

[Vax Pack Hero](#) from The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia teaches the history of vaccination while having the user fight up to 21 different vaccine-preventable diseases.



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Get in touch

For more details about the project, please visit our [programme page](#).

If you have any other ideas on how to increase vaccine uptake, or would like to offer additional feedback, please contact Patrick Swain:

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