

# Influenza Vaccination Challenges in The Asia-Pacific Region

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Within the Asia-Pacific region, expanding the use of seasonal influenza vaccines has been slow with Government commitment and the lack of influenza vaccine policies or guidelines in many countries remaining a challenge.

The utilisation of either influenza surveillance or targeted burden of disease research data from individual countries is essential for influenza policy development and vaccine introduction into countries, and the seasonal timing of vaccination programs and whether to use the either Northern or Southern hemisphere vaccine formulation, in each country in the region

Initiatives to document influenza vaccine use and recommendations in the region have been limited. The most recent survey conducted by the WHO WPR describes seasonal influenza vaccination policies, recommendations and vaccine use in 36 (97%) of 37 countries in the Western Pacific Region. Of concern, 11(30%) had no seasonal influenza vaccination policies or recommendations in place.

Having recommendations for seasonal influenza vaccine alone are not sufficient to encourage high levels of vaccine uptake. Reimbursement and communication policies appear to improve vaccine uptake irrespective of a countries development status. Although some countries, especially in the temperate zones, have targeted vaccine communication strategies, non-government organisations have filled the gap for establishing regional strategies. The Asia Pacific Alliance for the Control of Influenza (APACI), established in 2002 is as a Charitable Trust which focuses on influenza advocacy and has spawned Influenza Foundations in the region in Thailand (IFT), India (IIF) and Indonesia (IFI) and has linkages other health professional organisations. Communication is online [www.apaci.asia](http://www.apaci.asia) and through educational collaborations, bringing together healthcare professionals and other health professional groups, to focus on the best practices for the management, treatment and control of influenza, leading to improved policy and advocacy for seasonal influenza vaccine uptake in the region.