

Global call for access to RSV vaccination for all children worldwide

Utrecht, 26 June – In a joint appeal published in *The Lancet*, 44 leading scientific and social organisations from across the globe are calling on Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, to take urgent action to save millions of young lives by protecting them against RSV.

GAVI is a global partnership that works to ensure access to life-saving vaccines for children in the poorest countries. In collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO), Gavi has already saved millions of lives by vaccinating children against other major life-threatening diseases.

RSV (respiratory syncytial virus) is a highly contagious virus that causes serious illness in many young children every year. Worldwide, more than 100,000 children under the age of five die from RSV every year, with 97% of these occurring in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). Infants under six months old are particularly vulnerable, accounting for approximately 45% of RSV-related deaths. These deaths and serious illnesses can be prevented by vaccinating mothers or by giving babies protective treatment after birth.

In 2018, the Gavi Board acknowledged RSV as a priority and signalled support for adding RSV immunisation to its vaccine portfolio, as soon as effective products have been approved by the Strategic Advisory Group of experts (SAGE) of the World Health Organisation (WHO) and sufficient funding is available.

Now, two highly effective products have been approved and introduced in many high- and upper-middle-income countries: the RSVpreF vaccine for pregnant women and RSV monoclonal antibody Nirsevimab for newborn babies. In 2024, the WHO's SAGE recommended that "All countries introduce products for the prevention of severe RSV disease in infants."

The availability of sufficient funding is a prerequisite for GAVI to expand its vaccine portfolio with products that protect infants against RSV. However, global funding for vaccination programmes is under growing pressure. This has far-reaching consequences for countries with high child mortality and places additional pressure on Gavi's budget and its ability to support the introduction of new life-saving interventions.

Louis Bont, paediatric infectious disease specialist at UMC Utrecht and Chair of the ReSViNET Foundation: "We recognise the considerable budgetary challenges facing the Gavi Board. Nevertheless, we urge the Gavi board to prioritise RSV prevention and expand access to vaccine portfolio and thereby protecting all children against RSV, regardless of where they are born. We make this request on behalf of 44 global leading scientific and social organisations."

If you would like more information or an interview with dr. Louis Bont, please contact:
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