

## MEDIA RELEASE

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For immediate release**



**TURNING EVIDENCE INTO ACTION**

### **Influenza – is it worth the risk?**

All health care workers and people in 'at risk' groups should be vaccinated against influenza according to the National Institute of Clinical Studies (NICS), to help prevent the 1,500 deaths from influenza complications in Australia each year - a figure which equals the national road toll.

The National Institute of Clinical Studies (NICS) is Australia's national agency for closing gaps between evidence and practice in health care. NICS has launched their 2007 [www.fightflu.com.au](http://www.fightflu.com.au) campaign and website to provide information about the real risk of influenza and encourage vaccinations amongst health care providers, carers and people of all ages at risk of developing complications such as pneumonia.

"There are over 1.2 million Australians aged 18-64 who are in the 'at risk' groups because they have a chronic disease such as diabetes, kidney failure, cancer or severe asthma," said NICS Chief Executive Officer, Dr Heather Buchan.

"We know that vaccination is the single most effective preventive measure against influenza, but only 42 per cent of those 'at risk' are being vaccinated. People with a single chronic condition such as heart disease have a 40 times increased risk of death from influenza. If they have both heart and lung disease their risk increases 800 times, so vaccination is vital," she added.

Health care workers are an important group to vaccinate because they are at an increased risk of both contracting and spreading this highly contagious disease. In researching the barriers to influenza vaccination, NICS found that only 20-50 per cent of health care workers are currently being vaccinated and that barriers such as confusion with the common cold, a fear of needles and a belief that vaccination will give influenza were almost as prevalent as with 'at risk' groups.

Vaccination rates are increased when supported at an organisational level by senior management and there are good reasons for this support. Influenza accounts for 10 per cent of all workplace absenteeism due to illness and can have a debilitating impact on workers, their colleagues and their workflow, as well as their homelife.

"Influenza can kill and it costs this country \$130 million every year. We know that vaccinations save lives so avoiding it really isn't worth the risk," said Dr Buchan.  
Release ends.

For more information: [www.fightflu.com.au](http://www.fightflu.com.au)  
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