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Pneumonia jabs for pensioners to be scrapped 'as they don't work'

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No point: New research has revealed pneumonia jabs for the over-65s do not save lives, and so will now be scrapped (posed picture)

Pneumonia jabs for the over-65s are to be scrapped by the Government because they do not save lives.

Millions of pensioners have been vaccinated with a one-off jab that was supposed to give ten-year protection against an infection that causes pneumonia.

The vaccine programme is estimated to have swallowed up £100million – with jabs costing around £20 each including GPs' time – since it was launched in 2005.

As recently as January, the Department of Health was issuing promotional leaflets for the jab despite a number of studies questioning whether it works.

But independent experts on the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI), which advises the Government, claim it has had 'no discernible impact' on rates of pneumococcal disease.

It said the protection provided by the vaccine is poor and not long-lasting in older people.

It has told the Government's director of immunisation, Professor David Salisbury, there is little benefit in continuing the programme and it should be stopped.

However, the jab should still be given to children and people with risk factors such as respiratory and heart disease as the evidence is more 'robust', says the JCVI.

The type of jab for over-65s is pneumococcal polysaccharide vaccine sold under brand names Pneumovax and Pneumovax II. A different type is used in children.

The jab for older people has been linked to 30 deaths and more than 3,300 reported side effects, including heart disorders and joint and muscle pain, according to official figures from the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency.



No impact: Independent experts on the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) claim pneumonia jabs for the over-65s have no effect (posed picture)

It is offered when pensioners get their annual flu jab, with a typical uptake of 70 per cent, suggesting at least 3.8million people have had it.

The jab is meant to work against 23 common types of pneumococcal disease bugs but there has been mounting evidence it does not cut the risk of pneumonia in over-65s.

Even in 2005, when the programme in older people started after a majority vote in favour by the JCVI, there were doubts.

Last night Professor Salisbury said: 'The experts that advise us on vaccine programmes have recently reviewed the pneumococcal vaccination programme for over-65s and concluded the protection it offers is not effective enough and that the programme should cease.'

Charlotte Linacre, of the TaxPayers' Alliance, claimed the programme should have been reviewed earlier.

She said: 'The Department of Health shouldn't just throw money at a project without reviewing its effectiveness.'

Organisations:

[Department of Health](#),

[Joint Committee On Vaccination and Immunisation](#)