



Dear ATS Members,

World Immunization Week 2021: Vaccines bring us closer.

April 28, 2021 -- The week of April 23-30 marks World Immunization Week. This year, the World Immunization Week campaign theme is “vaccines bring us closer.” As the world unites to face the common threat of the COVID-19 pandemic, this theme has never been more appropriate. While COVID-19 vaccines have been developed in record time, vaccine supply and implementation lag, and there are large inequities in vaccine access. The 2021 World Immunization Week campaign calls for public health, stakeholders, and individuals to unite to increase trust and confidence in vaccines and to increase investment in vaccines, including routine immunization, to remove barriers to access.

While public health immunization programs have traditionally focused on pediatric immunization, the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on adults and their prioritization for vaccination have shed light on the challenges of adult vaccination. It is estimated that only 39% of the world’s population lives in a country with any routine adult immunization program. Therefore, systems must be rapidly developed in much of the world to deliver COVID-19 vaccines. Even within countries with strong adult immunization services, much more attention is needed to increase awareness, reduce hesitancy, and promote community readiness to be vaccinated.

The ATS Pulmonary Infections and Tuberculosis Assembly has recently formed a Vaccines and Immunizations Working Group, highlighting the important role immunization has in the care of persons with chronic lung disease and the responsibility of ATS healthcare providers to promote vaccination. The goals of the working group include advocating for rigorous and transparent scientific evaluation of vaccines, providing information on effective communication strategies to improve vaccination coverage, as well as strengthening immunization processes and policy recommendations within the ATS. Please join the Vaccines and Immunizations Working Group in celebrating World Immunization Week and in promoting the campaign theme that “Vaccines bring us closer” within ATS and in our communities.

See the new ATS working group announcement in the American Journal of Respiratory and Critical Care Medicine here: <https://doi.org/10.1164/rccm.202010-3990ED>