

# CDC Committee Tackles Childhood Immunizations

Josie Cooper

The Alliance for Patient Access, founded in 2006, is a national network of physicians dedicated to ensuring patient access to approved therapies and appropriate clinical care. AfPA accomplishes this mission by recruiting, training and mobilizing policy-minded physicians to be effective advocates for patient access. AfPA is organized as a non-profit 501(c)(4) corporation and headed by an independent board of directors. Its physician leadership is supported by policy advocacy management and public affairs consultants.

In 2012, AfPA established the Institute for Patient Access, a related 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation. The Institute for Patient Access is a physician-led policy research organization dedicated to maintaining the primacy of the physician-patient relationship in the provision of quality health care. In furtherance of its mission, IfPA produces educational materials and programming designed to promote informed discussion about patient access to approved therapies and appropriate clinical care.

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A CDC advisory committee's recent discussion about childhood immunizations could impact which new vaccines are available to which children.

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Recommendations about new vaccines and immunizations typically come from the CDC’s Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices, which is critical in protecting public health – including infant health. The committee’s meeting earlier this year spotlighted two specific vaccines: pneumococcal and RSV, or respiratory

syncytial virus.

## Pneumococcal Vaccine Considerations

Complex pneumococcal vaccines protect against infections, ranging from “mild to very dangerous,” that affect the brain, ears, and lungs.

Different pneumococcal vaccines are often compared based on how many strains of the bacterium they protect against, a concept known as valency. But as Melinda Wharton, MD, of the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices, noted in a [recent webinar](#), that is not the only factor that should be considered.

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The vaccines’ effectiveness in real-world use is also essential. Approved pneumococcal vaccines require four doses for complete protection. Nevertheless, many children, including the nation’s most vulnerable children, do not complete the entire series. Committee members should, therefore, also consider which vaccines offer the best protection if the series is not completed.

Considerations like these are crucial as the committee issues its formal recommendations, published in what is known as the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. Those recommendations need to highlight the differences among pneumococcal vaccines and potential trade-offs. Only then can pediatric healthcare providers make informed decisions about how to serve their patients best.

## RSV Vaccine Considerations

Forthcoming tools to protect against RSV are also on the CDC committee’s radar.

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In particular, the committee’s most recent meeting covered a maternal RSV vaccine and a novel immunization to protect infants from RSV. Both are expected to be approved by the FDA in the coming weeks. After that, the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices will decide whether to recommend these interven-

tions' use formally.

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The committee will also determine whether the novel immunization for infants, a long-acting preventive monoclonal antibody, should be added to the federally funded [Vaccines for Children Program](#). The program provides free shots to children who risk not being vaccinated due to a lack of insurance or financial resources. The committee's decision should ensure broad, equitable access – not exacerbate existing health disparities.

For a nation acutely aware of the impact of infectious diseases, access to immunizations is as timely a topic as ever. So too, is the role that the CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices plays in building trust, generating confidence, and ensuring access for young children.

**References:**

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2. [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Vaccines for Children Program \[Internet\]. Atlanta \(GA\): Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; \[cited 2023 Jun 13\]. Available from: https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/programs/vfc/index.html](https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/programs/vfc/index.html)

**Disclosures:** *Josie Cooper is the executive director of the Alliance for Patient Access. This article was also published at [healthpolicytoday.org](http://healthpolicytoday.org).*

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**Corresponding Author**



*Josie Cooper*  
Executive Director  
Institute for Patient Access  
2020 K Street NW, Suite 505  
Washington, DC 20006  
Telephone: (202) 951-7095  
Email: [jcooper@woodberryassociates.com](mailto:jcooper@woodberryassociates.com)

