

## Sanofi launches initiative to spread awareness on Influenza prevention

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Sanofi Pasteur, the vaccines division of Sanofi, has announced an initiative to educate parents in India about the seriousness of influenza (also known as flu) and preventing it amongst young children. Considering the grave impact of the disease across India in the beginning of 2015, renowned actor, director, singer, and father - Farhan Akhtar - has chosen to spread awareness about flu prevention. Farhan's messages will reach people via mass media and in-clinic as well.

Speaking about the initiative, Jean-Pierre Baylet, Country Head - Sanofi Pasteur India, said, "Influenza is a serious and contagious disease that often gets mistaken for common cold. As seen during the early part of the year, influenza outbreaks can cause significant morbidity and mortality and strain the health care system.

According to the WHO, the principal way of reducing Influenza burden is by vaccination. However lack of awareness is a limiting factor in vaccine usage. Sanofi Pasteur, India is therefore embarking on an initiative to educate the masses and improve awareness on Influenza and its prevention. We are delighted that Farhan Akhtar is supporting the cause of flu prevention to ignite attitudinal change towards influenza and its prevention."

Regarding his decision to support the cause, Farhan Akhtar said, "I was shocked to see the impact that flu has had across India in the last few months. As a parent, I was concerned for my children's welfare and hence, consulted their pediatrician. It was surprising to learn that flu is not a common cold, but a serious viral infection that carries a high risk especially amongst

children below the age of 5. It was reassuring to know that flu can be prevented and children can be protected against flu through timely vaccination. This was a revelation to me, and I am sure that there are others too who have misconceptions about the disease, inadvertently risking their children's lives. Hence, in my capacity as a public figure, I decided to support the initiative to spread the message on flu prevention."

Mr Arun Wadhwa, Senior Paediatric Consultant, South Delhi "It is very important for everyone and especially for higher risk groups such as children and senior citizens to get the annual flu shot. Vaccination protects not only against severe flu but also related complications such as pneumonia that can even lead to death. However, in India this is not common knowledge and so flu danger is taken lightly. Only in times when flu is prevalent, people take action. This is an unsafe practice and we need to change this mindset."

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), vaccination against influenza is currently the principal means of reducing or counteracting influenza mortality and reducing the morbidity burden in the country. The World Health Organization (WHO) has declared seasonal influenza a serious public health problem. Each year, influenza affects 5-15 percent of the global population but the rates can reach 40% - 50 percent in high risk groups. In India, millions are increasingly exposed to influenza and its life threatening health complications.

During the recent outbreak in the beginning of 2015, the virus affected approximately 33,000 people, killing nearly 2000 plus people. Since 2011, under its corporate initiative, 'I for Immunisation', Sanofi Pasteur India has conducted various awareness drives, such as launching a Facebook page called 'Mothers against flu.