



# PRESS STATEMENT

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## **New pneumonia vaccine safe for PNG children**

The new vaccine to prevent pneumonia is safe and very effective.

The pneumococcal conjugate vaccine (PCV) will be given in 3 doses at 1, 2 and 3 months of age along with other Expanded Programme for Immunisation vaccines.

Vaccine studies conducted at the PNG Institute of Medical Research (IMR) have proven that this PCV is safe and effective by boosting children's immunity levels to preventing the bacteria/germs that causes pneumonia, meningitis, sepsis and ear infections.

"It is the best preventative option for PNG," said Dr William Pomat, Deputy Director for Science and Research and Head of the Infection and Immunity Unit at IMR.

Every year, pneumonia kills more than 4,000 PNG children under the age of five; most of them infants, less than six months old and also older people above the age of 50.

Dr Pomat, who heads the PCV trial, is optimistic that once the roll-out of the vaccine begins; there will be a drastic decrease in the number of hospital admissions and the high infant deaths from pneumonia in the country.

IMR's research into the PCV started in 2005 looking into the vaccine's safety, its effects on the pneumonia bugs and on strengthening the body's immune system.

About 300 young Papua New Guineans, mostly infants took part in the study where they were given the vaccine earlier than in other countries and later were follow-up by study staff from birth.

Results of these studies were very positive, culminating in the introduction earlier this week. He said the onus is now on parents to take their children to the nearest health facility for immunization to protect their child from these nasty diseases.

He also thanked the study participants and the communities, government, IMR researchers, collaborators, and funding agencies to make the outcome of the research possible.

He added that pneumonia was still a burden and IMR is committed to see this health issue tackled.

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