

Experts elaborate on Asia's confidence and challenges with COVID-19 vaccine

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EU-ASEAN Business Council presented a virtual panel discussion addressing multi-sectorial solutions to increase vaccine confidence in APAC

Vaccine confidence has never been more important, as the world waits for the first COVID-19 protection options to move through the final stages of clinical trials and regulatory approval. Beyond COVID-19, life-course immunisation will continue to be an integral part of keeping infectious diseases at bay and a critical, yet currently under-utilised, public health defence.

On 1 Dec 2020, EU-ASEAN Business Council presented a virtual panel discussion focusing on,

- The barriers to enhanced vaccine confidence in Asia
- Multi-sectorial solutions to increasing vaccine confidence in the region
- The specific short- and long-term actions different stakeholders can put into action to enhance vaccine confidence

Some of the panel members were; Professor Tikki Pangestu Visiting Professor at the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, National University of Singapore; Professor Datuk Dr Zulkifli Ismail The Secretary-General of the Asia Pacific Pediatric Association (APPA) Consultant Paediatrician and Paediatric Cardiologist, KPJ Selangor Specialist Hospital, Malaysia; Dr Nan-Chang Chiu Chief of Department of Pediatrics, MacKay Children's Hospital, Taiwan and Director of Taiwan Pediatric Association, Taiwan; Salma Khalik Senior Health Correspondent, The Straits Times, Singapore and Member, Singapore Press Club. The discussion was moderated by; Chris Humphrey Executive Director, EU-ASEAN Business Council.

Some of the key highlights of the discussion are;

- Life-course immunization continues to be an important part of keeping infectious diseases at bay
- However, the critical issue of vaccine confidence and vaccine hesitancy has made vaccines an under-utilized public health defense
- During the panel, the speakers discussed the various roles of stakeholders in increasing vaccine confidence:
 - The role of media and social media in presenting accurate facts and information about vaccines
 - The role of healthcare professional societies and associations in being advocates for vaccination
 - The role of authorities in reporting accurate, timely and transparent information regarding vaccine safety
- Speakers agreed that although there are multifaceted barriers to vaccine confidence, the main barrier was the spread of misinformation and falsehood

- Public education and awareness is important to build trust and confidence