

THE ART OF RESEARCH

The flu vaccine is cost-effective in South Africa - we need more doses!

More investment in the flu vaccine is needed to save lives and reduce the cost of illness.



Heather Fraser is a researcher in economic evaluation, implementation science and vaccines at PRICELESS SA.

Many people view influenza, commonly referred to as the flu, as just another part of winter. However, not many know about the high number of deaths caused by flu, particularly amongst the most vulnerable in our society. Every year, about 11 000 people in South Africa die from the flu, with over 50 000 people requiring hospitalisation.

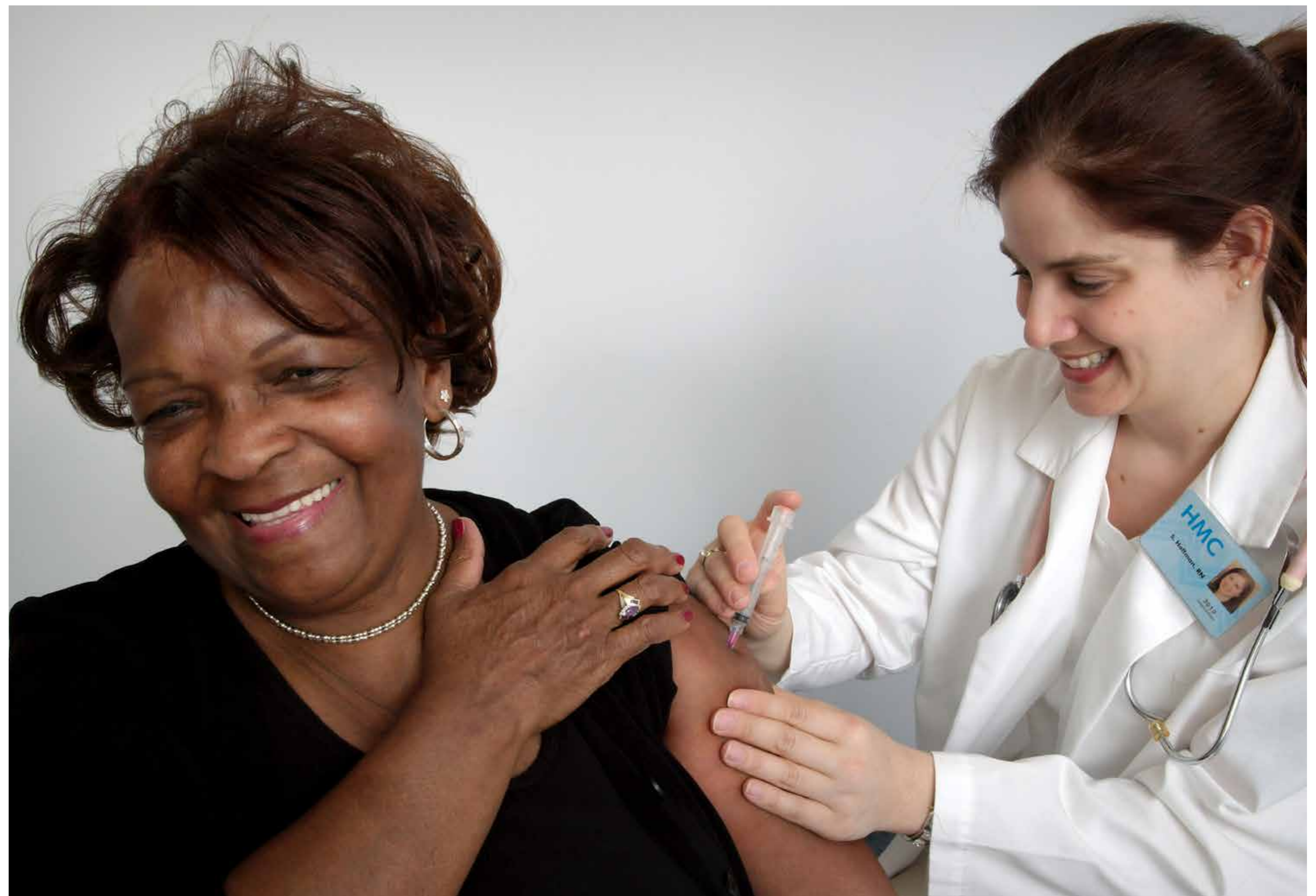
The influenza vaccine has been shown to be effective against the flu. The Department of Health has a flu vaccine programme which

offers vaccines to those at high risk of severe illness. This includes pregnant women, the elderly and people with HIV and other underlying medical conditions. However, only a million doses are procured annually, meaning that not everyone in the high risk groups can receive the vaccine.

Researchers at PRICELESS SA and the National Institute for Communicable Diseases, led by Ijeoma Edoka, have analysed the cost-effectiveness of the flu vaccine in

people at high risk of severe disease. They found that the vaccine is cost-effective, particularly in pregnant women and people living with HIV. In order to optimise the value of this intervention, investment is required to increase the number of flu vaccine doses available.

“If we are not able to provide this vaccine to those who need it most, the health system will continue to face a high economic and health burden as a result of the flu,” says Heather Fraser.



The flu vaccine is effective in preventing serious illness.



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