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## **AGPN welcomes government campaign on swine flu vaccination**

The Government's move to introduce a public education campaign on the importance of swine flu vaccinations is welcomed by the Australian General Practice Network (AGPN).

AGPN Chair Dr Emil Djakic said GPs were struggling to convince patients to have the jab because many did not understand the need for it.

"The seasonal flu vaccination has become a regular feature of Australian's health diary, especially for the elderly and the very young, but this is a new vaccination and people have not accepted it."

Dr Djakic said even people who were at high risk of complications or severe illness from swine flu – like pregnant women – were particularly hard to reach.

"The Australian Government's move to lead on this education program is essential. Doctors are doing all they can to encourage patients to be immunised, but there is nothing outside the practice motivating people to be immunised," he said.

He contributed the warm summer weather and the thought of winter ills being a long way into the future as reasons for patient apathy.

"We are still getting reports of high numbers of swine flu illnesses and deaths in the northern hemisphere as a result of the outbreak last year, this is not going away and will continue to be an issue in Australia in 2010.

"If more people are vaccinated now they will be immunised for the first wave of Influenza H1N1 when the weather turns colder and flu season starts in earnest. Waiting until the flu has returned in force puts the health of yourself and your community at risk," he said.

**For media interviews please phone AGPN Communications Manager Frith Rayner on 02 6228 0819 or 0402 267 190**