

Recent advances in the influenza virus vaccine landscape: a comprehensive overview of technologies and trials

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SUMMARY In the United Kingdom (UK) in 2022/23, influenza virus infections returned to the levels recorded before the COVID-19 pandemic, exerting a substantial burden on an already stretched National Health Service (NHS) through increased primary and emergency care visits and subsequent hospitalizations. Population groups ≤ 4 years and ≥ 65 years of age, and those with underlying health conditions, are at the greatest risk of influenza-related hospitalization. Recent advances in influenza virus vaccine

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technologies may help to mitigate this burden. This review aims to summarize advances in the influenza virus vaccine landscape by describing the different technologies that are currently in use in the UK and more widely. The review also describes vaccine technologies that are under development, including mRNA, and universal influenza virus vaccines which aim to provide broader or increased protection. This is an exciting and important era for influenza virus vaccinations, and advances are critical to protect against a disease that still exerts a substantial burden across all populations and disproportionately impacts the most vulnerable, despite it being over 80 years since the first influenza virus vaccines were deployed.

KEYWORDS adjuvanted, inactivated, influenza virus, LAIV, live attenuated, prevention, recombinant, vaccine efficacy, vaccine safety, vaccine technologies

INTRODUCTION

Whilst the influenza virus has been in circulation for centuries and vaccines available for over 80 years, the last two decades have seen substantial advances in influenza research and control, including the introduction of several new technologies for vaccination. In this review, we first provide a brief overview of the current epidemiological and vaccine policy landscape, before describing the available vaccine technologies and the related clinical data regarding their efficacy and effectiveness.

Influenza burden

Influenza viruses cause a substantial disease burden within the United Kingdom (UK) and around the world (1–5). In 2017, there were an estimated 145,000 deaths and 9.5 million hospitalizations globally caused by influenza-related lower respiratory tract infections (6). Following a reduction in the number of influenza cases during the COVID-19 pandemic, recent data suggest that the number of cases is now comparable with levels recorded before the pandemic (Fig. 1) (7, 8). In England during the 2022/23 influenza season, there were 8,751 hospitalized cases of confirmed influenza virus infection and an estimated 14,623 excess deaths associated with influenza (9). This is compared with 5,144 and 8,800 excess deaths in the 2018/19 and 2019/20 seasons, respectively (9).

Children ≤ 4 years and adults ≥ 65 years of age have the highest risk of influenza-related hospitalization (10). Other population subgroups at risk of severe influenza disease or complications include those with chronic medical or immunosuppressive conditions,

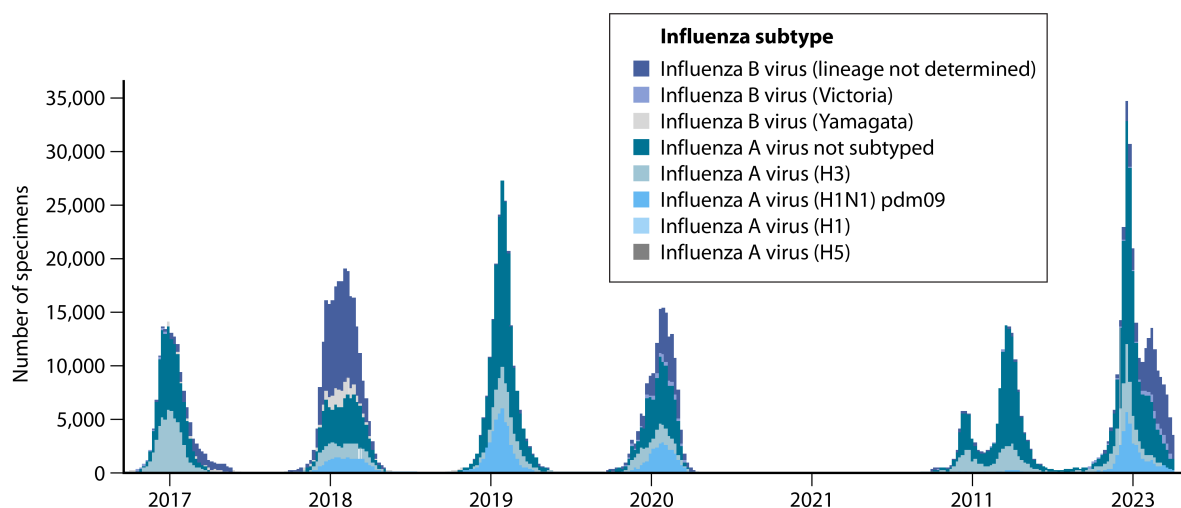


FIG 1 Influenza virus samples analyzed by GISRS for the WHO European Region from the 2016/2017 to the 2022/2023 influenza seasons (7). Data are from FluNet (<https://www.who.int/tools/fluNet>) (7). Changes have been made to the style and format of the figure in accordance with the license (<https://creativecommons.org/compatiblelicenses>). GISRS, Global Influenza Surveillance and Response System; WHO, World Health Organization.

TABLE 1 Risk groups who should be offered influenza virus vaccination according to UK government guidelines (11)^{a,b}

Clinical risk category	Examples (this list is not exhaustive, and decisions should be based on clinical judgment)
Chronic respiratory disease	Asthma that requires continuous or repeated use of inhaled or systemic steroids or with previous exacerbations requiring hospital admission. Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease including chronic bronchitis and emphysema; bronchiectasis, cystic fibrosis, interstitial lung fibrosis, pneumoconiosis, and bronchopulmonary dysplasia. Children who have previously been admitted to hospital for lower respiratory tract disease.
Chronic heart disease and vascular disease	Congenital heart disease, hypertension with cardiac complications, chronic heart failure, individuals requiring regular medication, and/or follow-up for ischemic heart disease. This includes individuals with atrial fibrillation, peripheral vascular disease, or a history of venous thromboembolism.
Chronic kidney disease	Chronic kidney disease at stages 3, 4, or 5, chronic kidney failure, nephrotic syndrome, and kidney transplantation.
Chronic liver disease	Cirrhosis, biliary atresia, and chronic hepatitis.
Chronic neurological disease	Stroke, transient ischemic attack. Conditions in which respiratory function may be compromised due to neurological or neuromuscular disease (for example, polio syndrome sufferers). Clinicians should offer immunization, based on individual assessment, to clinically vulnerable individuals including those with cerebral palsy, severe or profound, and multiple learning disabilities, Down's syndrome, multiple sclerosis, dementia, Parkinson's disease, motor neurone disease, and related or similar conditions; or hereditary and degenerative disease of the nervous system or muscles; or severe neurological disability.
Diabetes and adrenal insufficiency	Type 1 diabetes, type 2 diabetes requiring insulin or oral hypoglycemic drugs, and diet-controlled diabetes. Addison's disease, secondary or tertiary adrenal insufficiency requiring steroid replacement.
Immunosuppression	Immunosuppression due to disease or treatment, including patients undergoing chemotherapy leading to immunosuppression, patients undergoing radical radiotherapy, solid organ transplant recipients, bone marrow or stem cell transplant recipients, people living with HIV (at all stages), multiple myeloma, or genetic disorders affecting the immune system [for example, IRAK-4, NEMO, complement disorder, and severe combined immunodeficiency (SCID)]. Individuals who are receiving immunosuppressive or immunomodulating biological therapy including, but not limited to, anti-tumor necrosis factor (TNF) alemtuzumab, ofatumumab, and rituximab, and patients receiving protein kinase inhibitors or poly (ADP-ribose) polymerase (PARP) inhibitors and individuals treated with steroid sparing agents such as cyclophosphamide and mycophenolate mofetil. Individuals treated with or likely to be treated with systemic steroids for more than a month at a dose equivalent to prednisolone at 20 mg or more per day (any age), or for children under 20 kg, a dose of 1 mg or more per kg per day. Anyone with a history of hematological malignancy, including leukemia, lymphoma, and myeloma, and those with systemic lupus erythematosus and rheumatoid arthritis, and psoriasis who may require long term immunosuppressive treatments. Some immunocompromised patients may have a suboptimal immunological response to the vaccine.
Asplenia or dysfunction of the spleen	This also includes conditions, such as homozygous sickle cell disease, hereditary spherocytosis, thalassemia major, and celiac syndrome that may lead to splenic dysfunction.
Morbid obesity (class III obesity) ^b	Adults with a body mass index ≥ 40 kg/m ² .

^aAdapted from Green book chapter 19 (11) under the version 3.0 of the Open Government Licence.^bMany of this patient group will already be eligible due to complications of obesity that place them in another risk category.

such as transplant recipients, and healthcare workers who are at high risk of increased exposure to influenza virus (1, 11–14). The medical conditions considered at risk and for whom influenza virus vaccination is recommended in the UK are presented in Table 1; these groups will vary somewhat between countries (11, 15). In addition, influenza virus infection increases the risk of hospitalization in pregnant women and can cause harm to the developing fetus (16, 17). Inactivated influenza virus (IIV) vaccination is therefore recommended to pregnant women during any trimester, providing protection both to the mother and, passively, to the infant in the first 2–3 months (18, 19). Evidence supporting this recommendation includes results of a test-negative case-control study demonstrating that maternal influenza virus vaccination was associated with a vaccine effectiveness of 53% [95% confidence interval (CI): 30, 68] against influenza-related hospitalization and emergency department visits in infants less than 3 months of age (13).

The acute respiratory symptoms associated with influenza virus infection are widely reported; however, more recent studies have highlighted that influenza virus infection is associated with a broad range of adverse outcomes and long-term effects, including exacerbation of underlying medical conditions (20, 21), increased susceptibility to secondary bacterial infections (22), cardiovascular events such as myocardial infarction (23–25), functional decline in older individuals with high baseline frailty (26), and complications in pregnancy (27). Therefore, reducing disease severity through seasonal influenza virus vaccination may lead to a range of health benefits (28–32).

Influenza virus characteristics

There are four types of influenza virus; of these, influenza A and B viruses cause seasonal epidemics (33). Influenza A viruses are classified into subtypes, whereas influenza B viruses are classified into two different lineages, B-Victoria and B-Yamagata (33). Influenza A viruses exist as different subtypes with varied antigenic characteristics according to the type of hemagglutinin (HA) and neuraminidase (NA) glycoproteins on the virus surface; these glycoproteins facilitate infection of host cells (34–36). HA enables entry into the host cell, while NA cleaves mature virus from the host cell (36, 37). There is evidence that HA- and NA-targeting antibodies exert their activity via different mechanisms, and while HA antibodies are able to prevent influenza virus infection, NA antibodies are infection-permissive but may reduce disease severity (38).

Mutations in the HA and NA surface glycoproteins occur naturally during viral replication, sometimes resulting in different antigenic properties (39, 40). Antigenic drift involves small changes to HA and NA that commonly accumulate over time and may result in viruses that are antigenically different and no longer as well recognized by antibodies that were generated in response to infection by previous influenza strains or vaccination; over time, this leads to reduced protection from previously acquired immunity. Antigenic drift occurs in both influenza A and influenza B viruses (41–44) and has the potential to lead to epidemics. Antigenic shift due to reassortment may also occur in influenza A viruses and comprises a major and abrupt change in the genes encoding HA and/or NA (45, 46). For example, a new influenza A (H1N1) virus (S-OIV) emerged in 2009 with genes from viruses originating from North American and Eurasian swine, humans, and birds, causing a pandemic (47). If shifts are sufficiently large and involve subtypes that are novel in humans, they can result in a new influenza A virus subtype for which the population has limited or no immunity, thus causing pandemics (43, 44). It is also theoretically possible that a pandemic influenza virus might emerge in the future by gradual adaptation of a novel non-human subtype to humans.

History of the development of influenza virus vaccines

Vaccination remains the most effective public health intervention for the prevention of influenza virus infection (48, 49) and its associated complications (50, 51). Influenza A virus (strain H1N1) was first isolated in 1933, and in 1935, the virus was subsequently grown in fertilized chicken eggs (52, 53). The first influenza virus vaccine, developed in 1938 (Fig. 2), was an inactivated preparation containing a single influenza type A strain, termed a monovalent vaccine. The influenza B virus was subsequently discovered in 1940 (54), and in 1942, an inactivated bivalent vaccine containing influenza types A and B was developed (52). In 1977, the re-emergence of influenza A strain H1N1 (55, 56) prompted the World Health Organization (WHO) in 1978 to recommend a trivalent vaccine (against the H1N1 and H3N2 strains of influenza A and a type B virus) to ensure effective protection (57). In the 1980s, antigenic drift led to the circulation of two antigenically distinct lineages of influenza B virus (58). The trivalent vaccine offered little to no protection against the circulating influenza B virus in 5 of the 10 seasons between 2001 and 2011 (58–60). This necessitated a quadrivalent-inactivated influenza virus vaccine (QIV), which was subsequently developed and first approved in 2012, protecting against two influenza A (H1N1 and H3N2) and two influenza B virus strains (B-Victoria and B-Yamagata lineages) (61). Changes in circulating subtypes have continued, and

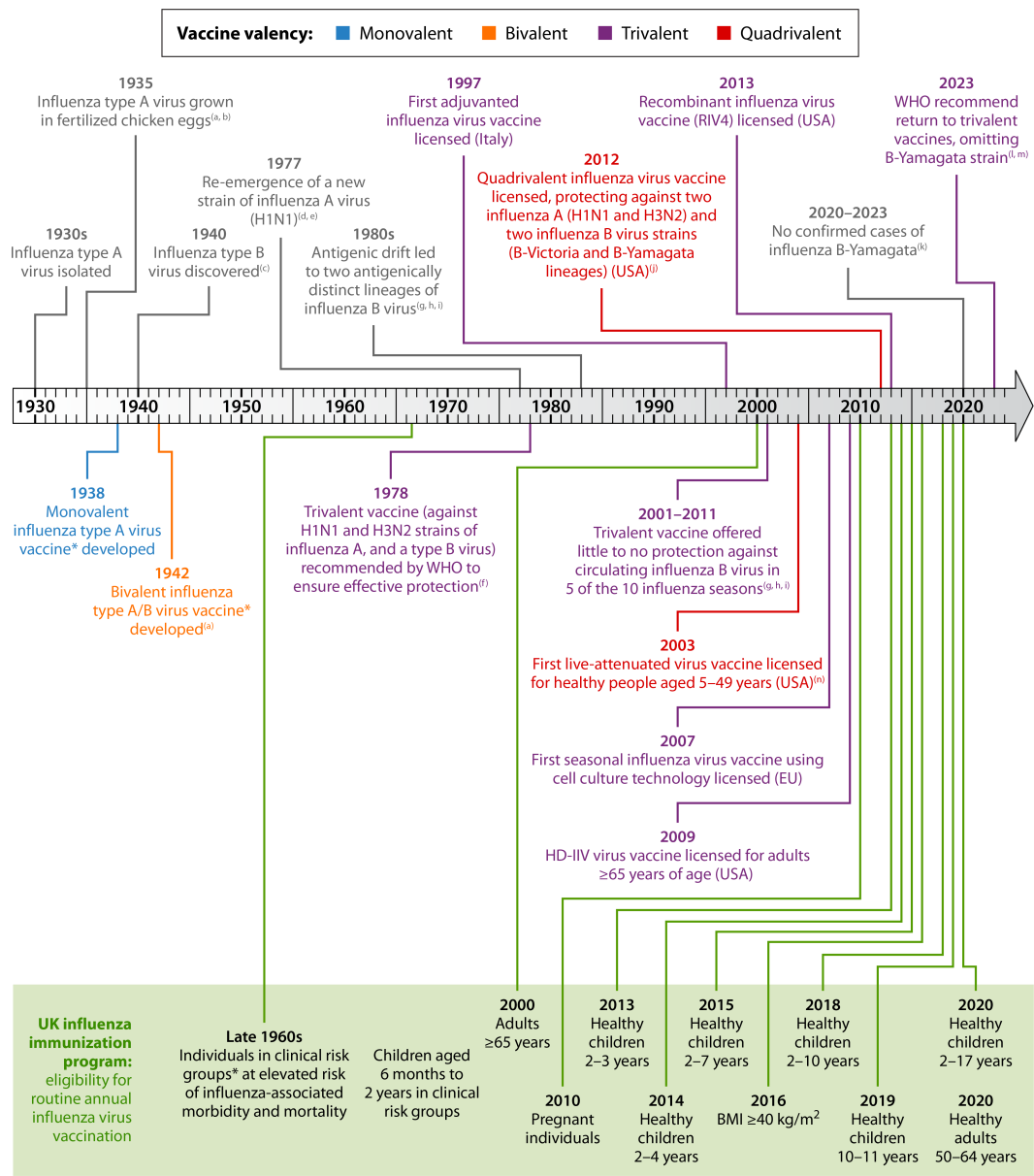


FIG 2 History of the development of influenza virus vaccines and development of the UK immunization program. Eligibility was introduced for healthy adults in 2020 in the UK but was removed in 2023 in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland (they remain in Scotland at time of publication). Superscript letters in the figure represent references as follows. (a) See reference (52). (b) See reference (53). (c) See reference (54). (d) See reference (55). (e) See reference (56). (f) See reference (57). (g) See reference (58). (h) See reference (59). (i) See reference (60). (j) See reference (61). (k) See reference (62). (l) See reference (63). (m) See reference (64). (n) See reference (65). *Patients in clinical risk groups include those with chronic respiratory disease, chronic heart and vascular disease, chronic kidney disease, chronic liver disease, chronic neurological disease, diabetes/adrenal insufficiency, immunosuppression, asplenia/splenic dysfunction, and morbid obesity. Patients who are carers or are household contacts of an immunocompromised individual may also be eligible (11). BMI, body mass index; EU, European Union; US, United States.

there have been no confirmed cases of influenza B-Yamagata detected since March 2020 (62), and in 2023, the WHO recommended a return to trivalent vaccines, omitting the B-Yamagata strain (63, 64). Given that vaccines are only effective against circulating virus strains and B-Yamagata is no longer in circulation, removal of this strain from the QIIV vaccine is unlikely to impact the effectiveness of the resulting trivalent inactivated influenza virus vaccine (TIIV). This timeline highlights the dynamic nature of influenza and needs to be considered in the approach to vaccination (Fig. 2).

WHO recommendations on strain selection

The antigenic shift and drift of influenza viruses necessitate regular updates to the composition of seasonal vaccines to remain effective. Each year, the WHO makes recommendations on the viral composition of influenza virus vaccines for both the Northern (October to February) and Southern hemisphere (September to January) influenza seasons. These recommendations are made 6 months ahead of the respective seasons and are based on surveillance data generated by the WHO Global Influenza Surveillance and Response System (49, 64). Designated national influenza centers around the world send isolated viruses for genetic and antigenic characterization to WHO collaborating centers, including the Francis Crick WHO collaborating center in the UK (66), and data from these centers are used to inform the recommendations on the composition of the influenza virus vaccine required for protection in the next season (64, 67, 68).

In the UK, national surveillance is conducted by the UK Health Security Agency, which collates and interprets data providing information on both influenza activity and estimates of all-cause mortality (9). Surveillance conducted during each influenza season also permits estimates of vaccine effectiveness (69–71), which can inform local recommendations (72).

National immunization programs

Most national influenza policies recommend vaccinating specific populations at increased risk of influenza-related complications (15, 73, 74). Recommendations across National Immunization Technical Advisory Groups (NITAGs) continue to evolve as vaccine technologies develop and vary somewhat between countries in terms of the ages and populations to be vaccinated, as well as vaccine types and dosages (72, 75–77). Differences in recommendations derive from the characteristics of available vaccines, clinical data, and local surveillance data used, as well as affordability and cost-effectiveness criteria (78).

To ensure that NITAG policy recommendations are consistent and transparent, the WHO recommends the use of a systematic, standardized decision-making process (79). The quality of evidence should be assessed using methods such as Grading of Recommendations Assessment, Development, and Evaluation (80), although it is not known whether all countries implement this approach.

In the UK, recommendations for population level vaccination are made by the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI), which reviews the criteria for a clinical risk group requiring influenza virus vaccination (11, 77). Since 2000, the list of clinical risk groups has been extended (Fig. 2) (11), as have the age groups of children who are eligible for routine annual influenza virus vaccination (Fig. 2) (77, 81–85).

Vaccines for pandemic preparedness

The WHO has a framework in place to improve preparedness for pandemic influenza, which leverages the capabilities of existing systems for seasonal influenza (86). Several countries have advance purchase agreements for pandemic-specific influenza virus vaccines, including the UK, USA, and Australia (87–89). The mRNA platform will be a key part of the pandemic vaccine response due to its ability to facilitate the rapid incorporation of new antigens, as demonstrated during the COVID-19 pandemic (90, 91). The influenza A virus subtype H5N1 is now enzootic in wild aquatic birds and is a severe, highly infectious influenza virus in susceptible avian species (86, 92). The increased genetic exchange among influenza viruses in wild aquatic birds, commercial and domestic poultry, pigs, and humans poses a continuing threat to humanity (86). Public health concerns have recently been heightened by the spillover of the novel highly pathogenic avian H5N1 influenza virus HA clade 2.3.4.4b into dairy cattle, where it appears to be transmitting via the milk (93–96). There have been cases of interspecies transmission to humans (94, 97–99), and the situation is being continuously monitored by health authorities worldwide (100–103). Although there is current interest

in pandemic vaccines, particularly with respect to the influenza A H5N1 virus, this is outside the scope of this review and has been assessed in a recent review article (104).

Influenza virus vaccine technologies

From the 1940s to the 2010s, IIV technology remained largely unchanged and consisted of inactivated viruses grown in embryonated chicken eggs (52). Influenza virus vaccines produced using egg-based technology have been available in the UK since the 1960s. Egg-based technology remains the most commonly used influenza virus vaccine production method worldwide, largely due to availability, manufacturing capability and scalability, low costs, and historical use, with safety and tolerability data collected over 50 years (105). However, technological advances in the past two decades have enabled the development of alternative technologies for manufacturing influenza virus vaccines, designed to overcome certain limitations of the standard egg-based vaccines. At present, there are six different influenza virus vaccine types available in the UK, five of which are manufactured using different technologies to that of the standard-dose egg-based IIVs [adjuvanted QIIV, cell-based QIIV, high-dose QIIV, live-attenuated influenza virus vaccines (LAIV), and recombinant QIIV] (106–112). Although these technologies have been previously described to varying extents (105, 113–117), there is no recently published comprehensive and detailed summary of the technologies and characteristics, alongside clinical data. The following sections represent the first comprehensive summary of advances in the influenza virus vaccine landscape, describing vaccine technologies in use in the UK and more widely, and reviewing associated clinical data.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Literature searches

We conducted a literature search in the PubMed database and Cochrane Library covering a ~6-year period from 01 January 2018 to 15 July 2024, limited to English language articles. The initial date of 2018 was chosen as this is when the enhanced influenza virus vaccines (i.e., those other than standard-dose egg-based influenza virus vaccines) became available in the UK and were recommended more consistently compared with standard-dose egg-based vaccines in other countries. The full search strategy, including search terms (Table S1) and the eligibility criteria for article selection (Table S2), is described in the supplemental materials. Filters were applied to include only randomized controlled trials (RCTs), systematic reviews, and meta-analyses. Articles were included if they described clinical studies investigating the efficacy or effectiveness of influenza virus vaccines with reported clinical outcomes such as (but not limited to) laboratory-confirmed influenza virus infection (a documented positive influenza test by viral culture, fluorescent antibody assay, reverse transcription-PCR, or a rapid influenza diagnostic test), influenza-like illness (ILI), or influenza-related hospitalization. There is no standard, international definition of ILI; the majority of studies in this review defined ILI as a clinical diagnosis based on symptoms, such as headache, high temperature, cough, and muscle pain. The WHO defines ILI as an acute respiratory infection with onset within the past 10 days, presenting with cough and a measured temperature of $\geq 38^{\circ}\text{C}$ (118), and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) as fever $\geq 37.8^{\circ}\text{C}$ and cough and/or sore throat (119).

Although immunogenicity data are a main criterion for annual re-licensure, they are not described here due to the lack of global standardization for measuring protective immune response using methods such as hemagglutination-inhibition assays (120) and uncertainties related to correlation with clinical protection (121, 122). Some studies have examined the impact of influenza virus vaccines on conditions more broadly associated with influenza, e.g., cardiovascular disease (29, 123–130), but these are not included as the focus of the review was respiratory infection and disease. As the safety profiles of influenza virus vaccines have been well established (49, 131), these data are not included in the results tables but are instead discussed in the text.

Seasonal influenza virus vaccines were included in the review and grouped based on the following technology:

- IIVs produced using egg-based technology (further sub-divided into standard dose, adjuvanted, and high dose).
- LAIVs.
- Recombinant influenza virus vaccines.
- IIVs produced using cell-based technology.

A summary of the studies selection strategy is reported in the flowchart in the supplemental material (Fig. S1). PubMed database and Cochrane Library searches returned a total of 278 publications, and an additional four publications that met the inclusion criteria were identified in a separate “manual search” (Fig. S1). After applying the exclusion criteria, 41 articles were selected for inclusion in this review (Tables 2 to 7) (131–171). A narrative approach was taken to data synthesis.

Summary of evidence

For each vaccine technology, a brief history of the development is given, followed by the key characteristics and a summary of the available clinical outcome data. Where available, data for absolute and/or relative vaccine efficacy and effectiveness are summarized. Efficacy and effectiveness are distinct concepts related to the therapeutic performance of a vaccine (172). Vaccine efficacy is measured under strictly controlled conditions, using RCTs; whereas vaccine effectiveness explores the performance of a vaccine in a real-world setting, generally using observational methods (173). Whilst observational studies have advantages, there is an inherent risk of bias; to mitigate this, studies that use randomization in real-world settings may be implemented.

OVERVIEW OF VACCINE TECHNOLOGIES

Manufacturing influenza virus vaccines: egg-based technology

Egg-based vaccine manufacturing is used to produce IIVs and LAIVs by classic genetic reassortment. This involves coinfection of the WHO candidate virus with either a selected high-growth virus (capable of replicating at high titers in eggs and cells) for IIV, or a master donor-attenuated virus for LAIV, into embryonated chicken eggs (174). Appropriate seed viruses are then selected by amplification in the presence of antibodies against the HA and NA of the high-growth virus or the master donor virus. The resulting viruses are used for vaccine production (Fig. 3) (174). This egg-adapted vaccine strain virus is then mass produced before undergoing purification and formulation (174).

The manufacturing of egg-based vaccine depends on the availability of embryonated chicken eggs and the ability of influenza viruses to propagate in eggs, and it is both time and biosecurity intensive (Fig. 3) (174, 175). In particular, the manufacturing process requires a prolonged process of planning and execution and can take several months (and usually a minimum of 4–6 months) (175, 176). Some influenza virus strains (especially avian strains such as H5N1) negatively impact egg production (177); therefore, the use of this technology may be unsuitable for the production of large titers required in pandemics. Furthermore, egg-based production can be affected by “egg-adaptation” of the influenza virus, resulting in changes to the antigenic structure of the HA protein (178–180). This egg-adaptation may result in antigenic differences between the antigens in the vaccine and the WHO-recommended strains. The phenomenon of antigenic mutations caused by egg adaptation is particularly prominent in H3N2 virus; a study found that, on passage of the virus up to 15 times in eggs, mutations occurred in three amino acid sequences in HA, two of which were located near the surface of the receptor binding site (179). Providing the WHO-recommended strains match the circulating strains, this will reduce vaccine effectiveness as the immune response in humans may not be optimally focused on the wild virus strain that was recommended by the WHO (181–183). The JCVI noted the issue of egg adaptation as a “real concern” but highlighted

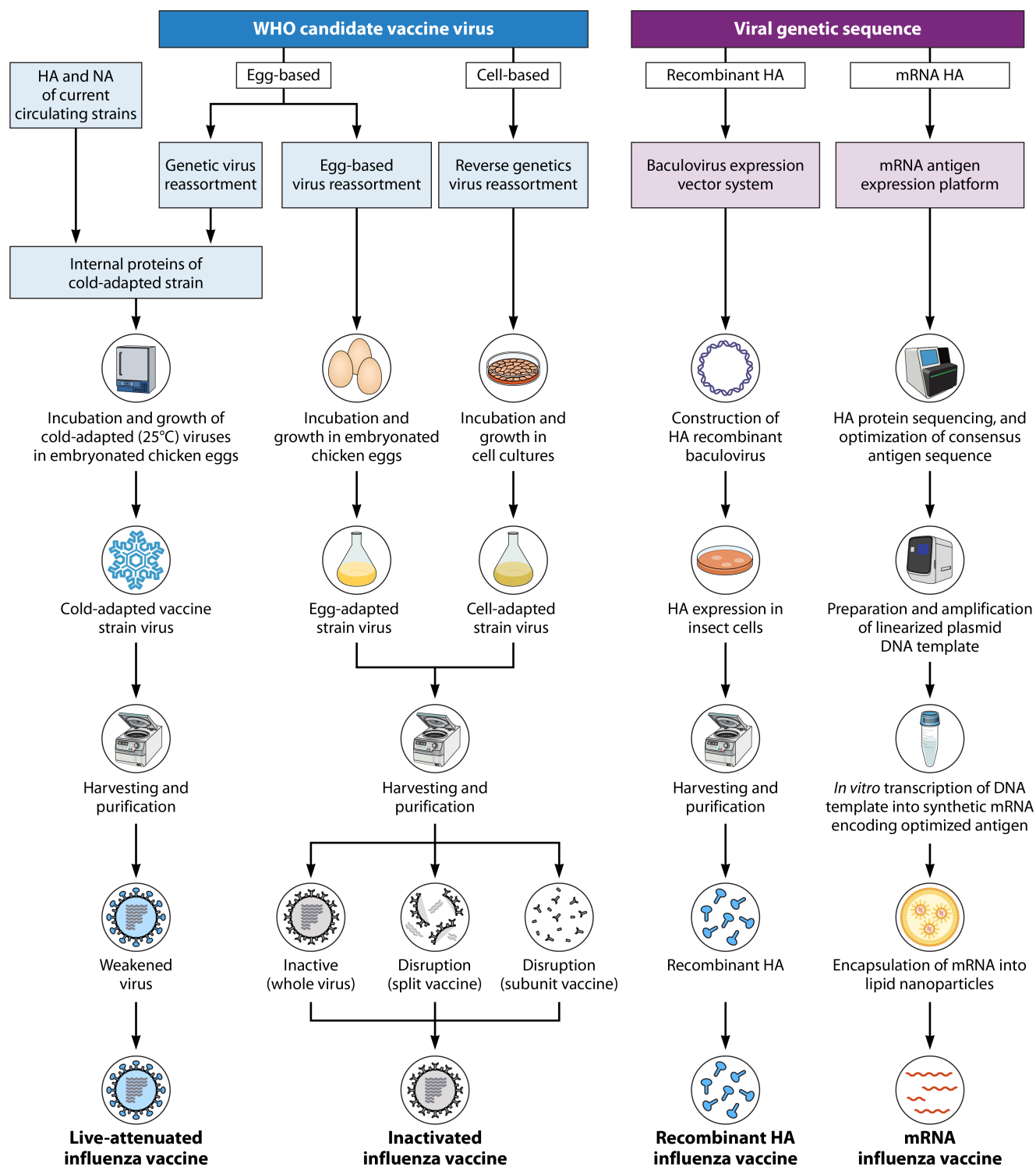


FIG 3 Overview of egg-based, cell-based, recombinant, and mRNA vaccine technologies. DNA, deoxyribonucleic acid; HA, hemagglutinin; mRNA, messenger ribonucleic acid.

that its impact will likely be limited to influenza seasons in which H3N2 strains dominate (77). Egg-adaptation is more common in H3N2 viruses than in H1N1 (184), perhaps because the former have had longer to adapt to the human airway, becoming less like avian influenza viruses. When grown in eggs, human H3N2 viruses may acquire mutations in the receptor-binding site of HA in order to facilitate their growth, which can alter

the antigenicity of HA (184). This, in turn, has been estimated to result in reductions in influenza absolute vaccine effectiveness by up to 16% (185). Despite these potential shortcomings, egg-based technology is well established and has been used for decades to successfully support the delivery of influenza immunization programs.

Although studies have demonstrated that individuals who are allergic to eggs can safely receive egg-based vaccines (186, 187), these vaccines are not recommended in people with certain egg allergies (18). Healthcare professionals outside of the UK should consult their relevant local guidelines regarding the use of egg-based vaccines in egg-allergies individuals (49).

Standard-dose inactivated influenza virus vaccines

Technology overview

There are three types of IIV: whole virion, split-virion, and subunit vaccines (Fig. 3). Whole vaccine inactivation is most commonly achieved through chemical modification, using formaldehyde or β -propiolactone or through physical manipulation by UV or gamma irradiation (188). Formaldehyde acts as a cross-linking agent; via this mechanism, formaldehyde suppresses viral genome replication and initiates viral genome degradation, thereby reducing viral infectiousness (188). β -propiolactone acts mainly as a nucleic acid alkylating agent, inhibiting viral genome replication (188). UV radiation and gamma irradiation primarily cause the destruction of the viral genome, interfering with viral replication and transcription in host cells. In split-virion vaccines, the viral envelope has been disrupted using a surfactant (189). The split-virion vaccine can be further purified to remove other viral components, such as the internal subviral core, to yield viral subunits containing HA and NA antigens (a subunit vaccine) (116). The current standard dose of TIIV and QIIV formulations contain, in addition to the other viral components, a standardized 15 μ g of HA per strain per dose (49).

Clinical data: efficacy and effectiveness

IIVs have shown efficacy in all age groups, including children and adolescents 6 months to 17 years of age, adults ≥ 65 years of age and pregnant individuals (Table 2) (133, 135–139, 141, 142, 145, 146, 164–166). As egg-based SD-IIVs were the standard of care prior to the development of newer technologies, historical comparisons of vaccine efficacy and effectiveness were predominantly made to placebo (e.g., saline), non-influenza virus vaccine control, or no vaccination (Table 2). Newer technologies may be compared with egg-based SD-IIVs.

A systematic review and meta-analysis that included 41 studies of children and adolescents 2–16 years of age showed that, compared with placebo or no vaccination, IIV treatment was associated with a 64% reduction in risk of laboratory-confirmed influenza (95% CI: 52, 72; $N = 1,628$; high-certainty evidence) and reduced ILI by 28% (95% CI: 21, 35; $N = 19,044$; moderate-certainty evidence; Table 2) (165). In a systematic review and meta-analysis of 25 studies in healthy adults 16–65 years of age comparing IIV against placebo or unvaccinated control groups, the risk of laboratory-confirmed influenza was reduced by 59% (95% CI: 53, 64; $N = 71,221$; moderate-certainty evidence), and the risk of ILI was reduced by 16% (95% CI: 5, 25; $N = 11,924$; low-certainty evidence) after IIV (Table 2) (164). Results from a Cochrane review in adults ≥ 65 years of age demonstrated that IIV reduced the risk of laboratory-confirmed influenza over a single season by 58% compared with placebo (95% CI: 34, 73; $N = 2,217$; low-certainty evidence) and the risk of ILI (subjective report) by 41% compared with those who were not vaccinated over a single influenza season (95% CI: 27, 53; $N = 6,894$; moderate-certainty evidence; Table 2) (166). In a pooled estimate from three RCTs, vaccine efficacy for QIIV, compared with control [placebo or a non-influenza (meningococcal ACWY) vaccine], against laboratory-confirmed influenza in pregnant individuals was 50% (95% CI: 32, 63; Table 2) (142).

TABLE 2 Overview of studies included in the review—standard-dose inactivated influenza virus vaccines

Citation/reference	Evidence type/study design	Vaccine investigated	Control/comparator	Study population	Primary study outcome	Key efficacy result(s) ^d	Key effectiveness result(s) ^e
Infants ≤6 months of age							
Jarvis et al. (133)	Meta-analysis of two RCTs from a systematic review of RCTs and observational studies published up to October 2019	IIV	Placebo (saline)	Infants ≤6 months of age following maternal influenza virus vaccination (N = 5,742)	Laboratory (PCR)-confirmed influenza	Pooled VE of 34% (95% CI: 15, 50)	N/A
Children and infants ≥6 months of age							
Claeys et al. (139) ^b	Multinational RCT in five independent cohorts across influenza seasons from 2011 to 2014	QIIV	Non-influenza virus vaccine	Children 6–35 months of age (N = 12,018 vaccinated)	Laboratory (RT-PCR)-confirmed influenza	VE was 64% (97.5% CI: 53, 73) against moderate-to-severe influenza and 50% (97.5% CI: 42, 57) against all influenza (regardless of disease severity)	N/A ^c
Danier et al. (137) ^b	Exploratory analysis of a multinational RCT in five independent cohorts across influenza seasons from 2011 to 2014	QIIV	Non-influenza virus vaccine	Children 6–35 months of age (N = 12,018 vaccinated)	Laboratory (RT-PCR)-confirmed influenza	Moderate-to-severe illness was 41% less N/A likely [crude odds ratio 0.59 (95% CI: 0.44, 0.77)] and fever >39°C was 46% less frequent [crude odds ratio 0.54 (95% CI: 0.39, 0.75)]	
Dbaibo et al. (135) ^b	Multinational RCT in five independent cohorts across influenza seasons from 2011 to 2014	QIIV	Non-influenza virus vaccine	Children 6–35 months of age (N = 12,018 vaccinated)	Laboratory (RT-PCR)-confirmed influenza	VE across the five seasonal cohorts was 57.8% (95% CI: 40.2, 70.8), 52.9% (95% CI: 31.2, 68.3), 73.4% (95% CI: 61.7, 82.0), 30.3% (95% CI: 5.5, 48.8), and 41.4% (95% CI: 29.0, 51.7)	N/A
Pepin et al. (138)	Multinational RCT during the 2014/2015 and 2015/2016 influenza seasons	QIIV	Placebo or TIV (split virion)	Children 6–35 months of age (N = 5,805)	Laboratory-confirmed influenza caused by any influenza A or B types or by vaccine-similar strains	VE was 51.0% (97% CI: 37.4, 61.9) against influenza caused by A or B type, and 68.4% (47.1, 81.9) against influenza caused by vaccine-like strains	N/A
Esposito et al. (136)	RCT during three influenza seasons (2017–2019)	QIIV	Non-influenza virus vaccine	Influenza-naïve children 6–35 months of age (N = 2,000 vaccinated)	Symptomatic influenza virus infection	aVE against any circulating influenza strain was 54% (95% CI: 37, 66)	N/A
Sullender et al. (145)	Cluster RCT	TIIV	IPV	Children 6 months to 10 years of age (N = 4,345)	Laboratory-confirmed influenza	Total VE was 25.6% (95% CI: 6.8, 40.6) in 1 year to 74.2% (95% CI: 57.8, 84.3) in 3 year.	N/A
Mallory et al. (141)	Systematic review and meta-analysis of five studies during the 2016/2017 influenza season	IIV	Not specified	Children 6 months to 17 years of age	Laboratory (PCR-, culture-, or antigen)-confirmed influenza	Consolidated VE of 47% (95% CI: 29, 61) against all influenza strains	N/A
Wall et al. (134)	Analysis of 10 observational VE studies from a systematic review	TIIV or QIIV	No vaccination	Children 6 months to 8 years of age	Hospitalizations, acute respiratory	N/A	VE for all age groups were higher for fully vaccinated groups (range

(Continued on next page)

TABLE 2 Overview of studies included in the review—standard-dose inactivated influenza virus vaccines (Continued)

Citation/reference	Evidence type/study design	Vaccine investigated	Control/comparator	Study population	Primary study outcome	Key efficacy result(s) ^a	Key effectiveness result(s) ^a
	of VE or immunogenicity studies published up to April 2019				infection, medically attended influenza illness, influenza-like illness, or pneumonia and influenza		between 7% [95% CI: -80, 50] and 86% [95% CI: 29, 97]) than partially vaccinated groups [range between -41% (95% CI: -150, 20) and 73% (95% CI: 3, 93)]
Diallo et al. (144)	Cluster RCT in Senegal during the 2008/2009 influenza season	TIIV	IPV	Children 6 months to 10 years of age (<i>N</i> = 11,670 eligible)	Laboratory (rRT-PCR)-confirmed symptomatic influenza	N/A	Total and indirect VE against seasonal A/H3N2 influenza were 43.6% (95% CI: 18.6, 60.9) and 15.4% (95% CI: -22.0, 41.3), respectively
Niang et al. (143)	Consecutive cluster RCTs in 2010 and 2011	TIIV	IPV	Children 6 months to 10 years of age	Laboratory-confirmed influenza	N/A	Total VE against all strains was 52.8% (95% CI: 32.3, 67.0) for year 2
Boddington et al. (140)	Meta-analysis of 37 studies (test-negative design) published up to June 2020	TIIV or QIIV	Not specified	Children 6 months to 17 years of age	Laboratory-confirmed influenza-associated hospitalization	N/A	VE for all IIVs was 67.1% (95% CI: 53.5, 76.8); 47.5% (95% CI: 39.5, 54.4) for TIIV and 50.2% (95% CI: 10.7, 72.3) for QIIV
Jefferson et al. (165)	Cochrane review of 41 RCTs published up to July 2017	IIV	Placebo or no vaccination	Children 2–16 years of age	Laboratory-confirmed influenza (viral isolation, serological supporting evidence, or both) influenza and ILI	VE for laboratory-confirmed influenza was 64% (95% CI: 52, 72) VE for ILI was 28% (95% CI: 21, 35)	N/A
Adults							
Demicheli et al. (164)	Cochrane review of 25 RCTs or quasi-RCTs published up to July 2017	IIV	Placebo or no vaccination	Adults 16 to 65 years of age	Laboratory-confirmed influenza (viral isolation, serological supporting evidence, or both) and ILI	VE for laboratory-confirmed influenza was 59% (95% CI: 53, 64) VE for ILI was 16% (95% CI: 5, 25)	N/A
Adults ≥65 years of age							
Demicheli et al. (166)	Cochrane review of eight RCTs published up to July 2017	TIIV	Placebo or no vaccination	Adults ≥65 years of age (<i>N</i> ≥ 5,000)	Laboratory-confirmed (viral isolation, serological supporting evidence, or both) influenza and ILI	Over a single season: VE for laboratory-confirmed influenza was 58% (95% CI: 34, 73) VE for ILI was 41% (95% CI: 27, 53)	N/A
Pregnant individuals							

(Continued on next page)

TABLE 2 Overview of studies included in the review—standard-dose inactivated influenza virus vaccines (Continued)

Citation/reference	Evidence type/study design	Vaccine investigated	Control/comparator	Study population	Primary study outcome	Key efficacy result(s) ^a	Key effectiveness result(s) ^a
Omer et al. (142)	Pooled analysis of three RCTs		Placebo or meningococcal conjugate vaccine	Pregnant individuals (N = 10,002)	Laboratory (PCR)-confirmed influenza	Pooled VE was 50% (95% CI: 32, 63), from enrolment to follow-up at 6 months postpartum	N/A

^aPrimary outcome data only reported.
^bPublications of the same clinical trial ([NCT01439360](#)) reporting different outcomes. aVE, absolute vaccine effectiveness; CI, confidence interval; IV, inactivated influenza virus vaccine; ILI, influenza-like illness; IPV, inactivated poliovirus vaccine; QIV, quadrivalent inactivated influenza virus vaccine; RCT, randomized controlled trial; RT-PCR, reverse transcription PCR; SD-IV, standard-dose inactivated influenza virus vaccines; TIV, trivalent inactivated influenza virus vaccine; VE, vaccine efficacy/effectiveness.
^cN/A, not applicable.

Clinical data: safety

Vaccination with IIV has some common adverse effects (AEs). Compared with placebo, IIV was associated with an increased risk of fever in adults ≥ 18 years of age (164) and increased risk of sore arm and swelling in adults ≥ 65 years of age (166). In a multinational RCT in children 6–35 months of age, the safety profiles were similar for QIIV, TIIV, and placebo, except for more frequent injection-site reactions with QIIV compared with placebo (138).

Although egg-based SD-IIVs are progressively less used in the UK, in some countries, they are still utilized, particularly in younger cohorts, and are used in national immunization programs (190, 191). Indeed, SD-IIVs are now only recommended in the UK for individuals < 65 years of age in the “at risk” cohorts as a third-line option, in the event that the first- or second-line options recommended by the JCVI are simultaneously unavailable for vaccination (77).

High-dose inactivated influenza virus vaccines

Technology overview

Older adults (≥ 65 years of age) are affected by waning humoral and cellular immunity that occurs with aging, known as immunosenescence (192), which is thought to increase disease susceptibility and severity and reduce responses to vaccination (192, 193). High-dose IIVs are developed using the same egg-based technology as standard-dose egg-based vaccines but contain in addition to the other viral components a higher dose of HA per strain (60 μg per strain rather than 15 μg). The higher doses of HA induce increased post-vaccination HA-specific antibody titers and provide increased protection from influenza, which makes them particularly appropriate for use in older people (194–196).

Clinical data: efficacy and effectiveness

High-dose IIVs have demonstrated improved vaccine efficacy compared with SD-IIVs in terms of protection against laboratory-confirmed influenza or ILI (Table 3) (132, 150–152, 168, 169). In a meta-analysis of 21 studies that included data over 12 consecutive influenza seasons and among 45 million individuals of ≥ 65 years, high-dose TIIV demonstrated improved protection against laboratory-confirmed influenza or probable ILI compared with standard-dose TIIV/QIIV (relative vaccine effectiveness of 24.1%; 95% CI: 10.0, 36.1) (Table 3) (150). Similar results were reported for efficacy against laboratory-confirmed influenza in adults (including studies of adults ≥ 65 years of age and immunocompromised adults); high-dose TIIV was associated with a 24% (95% CI: 10, 36) reduction in risk compared with SD-TIIV (Table 3) (152). In a meta-analysis of five RCTs in adults ≥ 65 years of age, the use of high-dose TIIV/QIIV was associated with reduced risk of hospitalization due to pneumonia or influenza when compared with standard-dose TIIV/QIIV (pooled relative vaccine efficacy: 23.5%; 95% CI: 12.3, 33.2; Table 3) (170).

Clinical data: safety

In a systematic review that included 36 studies of adults (≥ 18 years of age), high-dose IIVs were associated with higher rates of local and systemic AEs compared with SD-IIVs, including a higher frequency of headache, chills, and malaise (168).

Adjuvanted-inactivated influenza virus vaccines

Technology overview

Adjuvanted IIVs are developed using the same egg-based technology as standard- or high-dose egg-based vaccines, but an adjuvant is added. Adjuvants are substances that enhance the magnitude, breadth, and durability of the vaccine-induced immune response via various signaling pathways, leading to enhanced chemokine and cytokine secretion and activation of immune cells (197, 198). Common vaccine adjuvants include

TABLE 3 Overview of studies included in the review—high-dose inactivated influenza virus vaccines^a

Citation/reference	Evidence type/study design	Vaccine investigated	Control/comparator	Study population	Primary study outcome	Key efficacy result(s) ^b	Key effectiveness result(s) ^b
Adults ≥18 years of age Comber et al. (168)	Systematic review and meta-analysis of studies including adults ≥18 years (<i>n</i> = 36)	HD-TiIV	SD-TiIV or no vaccination	Adults ≥65 years of age	Laboratory-confirmed influenza	VE was 24% (95% CI: 10, 37) vs SD-TiIV (<i>n</i> = 1 RCT)	VE was 89% (95% CI: 47, 100) against influenza B and 22% (95% CI: -82, 66) for influenza A (H3N2) vs no vaccination (<i>n</i> = 1 test-negative case control study)
Veroniki et al. (169)	Systematic review and meta-analysis of studies including adults ≥60 years (<i>n</i> = 41)	HD-TiIV	Placebo or SD-TiIV	Adults ≥60 years of age	Laboratory-confirmed influenza/probable ILI	VE was 72.9% (95% CI: 43.5, 86.6) for laboratory-confirmed influenza vs placebo (pairwise and network meta-analysis) VE was 1.8% (95% CI: -1.8, 7.2) for ILI vs SD-TiIV (pairwise meta-analysis)	N/A
Adults ≥65 years of age Lee et al. (151)	Systematic review and meta-analysis of studies including adults ≥65 years (<i>n</i> = 7)	HD-TiIV	SD-TiIV	Adults ≥65 years of age	Laboratory-confirmed influenza/probable ILI	rVE was 19.5% (95% CI: 8.6, 29.0)	N/A
Lee et al. (132)	Updated systematic review and meta-analysis of RCTs and observational studies (<i>n</i> = 15; 2009–2019)	Updated and HD-TiIV	SD-TiIV/SD-QiIV	Adults ≥65 years of age	Laboratory-confirmed influenza/probable ILI	Pooled rVE was 15.9% (95% CI: 4.1, 26.3) (<i>n</i> = 2 RCTs and <i>n</i> = 3 observational studies)	Pooled rVE was 15.9% (95% CI: 4.1, 26.3; <i>n</i> = 2 RCTs and <i>n</i> = 3 observational studies)
Lee et al. (150)	Updated systematic review and meta-analysis of RCTs and observational studies (<i>n</i> = 21; 2009–2022)	Updated and HD-TiIV	SD-TiIV	Adults ≥65 years of age (<i>N</i> ≥ 45 million)	Laboratory-confirmed influenza/probable ILI	Pooled rVE was 24.1% (95% CI: 10.0, 36.1; <i>P</i> = 0.002) (<i>n</i> = 3 RCTs)	Pooled rVE was 11.1% (95% CI: -0.1, 21.0; <i>P</i> = 0.051; <i>n</i> = 8 observational studies)
Skaarup et al. (170)	Meta-analysis of RCTs including adults ≥65 years (<i>n</i> = 5)	HD-TiIV/HD-QiIV	SD-TiIV/SD-QiIV	Adults ≥65 years of age (<i>N</i> = 105,685)	Pneumonia and influenza hospitalization	Pooled rVE was 23.5% (95% CI: 12.3, 33.2) for pneumonia and influenza hospitalizations vs SD-TiIV/SD-QiIV	N/A
Older adults and immune-suppressed adults Weissman et al. (152)	Systematic review and meta-analysis of RCTs (<i>n</i> = 16; 47,857 patients)	HD-TiIV	SD-TiIV	Older adults (<i>n</i> = 10 trials) and immune-suppressed patients (<i>n</i> = 3 trials)	Laboratory-confirmed influenza	Pooled VE was 24% (95% CI: 10, 36) ^c	N/A ^d

^aCI, confidence interval; HD, high dose; ILI, influenza-like illness; RCT, randomized controlled trial; RR, relative risk; rVE, relative vaccine efficacy/effectiveness; SD, standard dose; TiIV, trivalent inactivated influenza virus vaccine; VE, vaccine efficacy/effectiveness.
^bPrimary outcome data only reported.
^cOutcome stemmed mainly from one trial in older adults.
^dN/A, not applicable.

alum, oil-in-water emulsions (such as MF-59 and AS03), combinations of alum, emulsions, and/or liposomes, and toll-like receptor ligands (197). As with high-dose IIVs, the potentially improved immunogenicity of adjuvanted vs non-adjuvanted vaccines makes them suitable for older adults who have waning humoral and cellular immunity (199).

Clinical data: efficacy and effectiveness

Results from a multicenter RCT in children 6 months to 5 years of age, over two influenza seasons (2013–2015), showed an MF59-adjuvanted vaccine (aQIIV) to be effective in preventing laboratory-confirmed influenza compared with IIV (TIIV or QIIV), in a 6–23 months subgroup [relative vaccine efficacy 31.37% (95% CI: 3.14, 51.38)] but not for the overall study population (age 6 months to 5 years), with a relative vaccine efficacy of –0.67% (95% CI: –19.81, 15.41; Table 4) (153). This is perhaps because children younger than 2 years have immature immune systems that are known to respond relatively poorly to standard influenza vaccines. Evidence from a systematic review and meta-analysis of 48 studies demonstrated that adjuvanted standard-dose egg-based influenza virus vaccines were also effective at preventing laboratory-confirmed influenza among older adults (≥ 65 years of age) compared with no vaccination (absolute vaccine effectiveness of 45%; 95% CI: 23, 61; from five non-randomized intervention studies across three influenza seasons) and had similar relative vaccine effectiveness to their non-adjuvanted counterparts (Table 4) (167). However, a systematic review of 11 analyses from nine real-world evidence studies of adults ≥ 65 years of age reported that adjuvanted trivalent vaccines were significantly more effective at reducing influenza-related outcomes than non-adjuvanted standard-dose vaccines (relative vaccine effectiveness ranging from 7.5% to 25.6% for adjuvanted vs non-adjuvanted TIIVs, and from 7.1% to 36.3% vs non-adjuvanted QIIVs; Table 4) (156).

Clinical data: safety

Adjuvanted vaccines have been associated with more frequent local and systemic AEs than non-adjuvanted standard-dose egg-based vaccines (153, 154, 167), including a higher frequency of arm pain/tenderness, fever, myalgia, and chills (153, 154, 167). This has also been observed with non-influenza virus vaccines (200, 201) and is likely related to the mechanism of action of the adjuvant (202).

Live-attenuated influenza virus vaccines

Technology overview

LAIVs use “cold-adapted” viruses, produced by chemical mutagenesis or serial passage of influenza viruses in eggs at gradually lower temperatures to introduce mutations (203, 204). Because of the segmental viral genome of the influenza virus, it is possible to mix genetic material from different strains. In the case of LAIV, internal gene segments (PB1, PB2, PA, NP, and M NS) from the attenuated cold-adapted strain are then combined with HA and NA of the target virus strains to create a reassortant vaccine virus (Fig. 3), which replicates efficiently at low temperatures (in the upper respiratory tract) but not at elevated temperatures (in the lower respiratory tract) (49, 105, 203). The specific combinations of HA and NA genes can affect the immunogenicity of the recombinant vaccine virus (205). The interplay between the vaccine virus and the innate immune response may shape the downstream adaptive response (206).

The design of LAIVs, to replicate at the lower temperatures in the upper respiratory tract, requires intranasal delivery. This method of delivery allows for ease of administration, making them more acceptable to children compared with an injectable vaccine (11), as they are likely to be associated with little or no pain. Compared with other routes of administration, LAIV provides a broader response by involving both systemic and mucosal immune responses. Additionally, LAIV may also induce a strong influenza virus-specific cellular response (206–210). The mucosal immune response induced by LAIV vaccination is mediated through mucosal Immunoglobulin A (IgA) directed at the HA

surface glycoprotein (207, 211), with the HA-specific IgA response being greater than that induced by IIV (212). Inducing airway mucosal immune responses may be more protective than systemic immunity alone by preventing virus infection at the point of entry (213).

A major justification for the use of LAIVs in school children, particularly those in primary education, is that they can also provide herd immunity protecting adults and elderly adults in the surrounding population. This was observed after the introduction of LAIVs in primary school-age children, demonstrating the impact of LAIVs in reducing transmission (214). As LAIVs stimulate a weaker immune response in adults compared with children, possibly due to pre-existing immunity that prevents viral establishment (209, 215, 216), they are not currently recommended or licensed for use in those >18 years age in the UK (77). However, LAIVs are licensed in the USA in adults ≤49 years of age (65). Due to the potential risk of infection from using live viruses for immunization, LAIVs are not recommended for individuals who are immunocompromised (18).

Clinical data: efficacy and effectiveness

LAIVs have demonstrated efficacy in children from 6 months of age (Table 5) (131, 140, 141, 146–149, 165). Compared with placebo or no vaccination, LAIVs were shown to reduce ILI by 31% (95% CI: 20, 40) based on data from a systematic review of RCTs including 124,606 children 3–16 years of age (Table 5) (165). Another systematic review and meta-analysis of children <18 years of age who were vaccinated with trivalent LAIVs showed a 48% (95% CI: 18, 68) reduced risk of laboratory-confirmed influenza compared with TIV (Table 5) (131).

Clinical data: safety

The results of two RCTs demonstrated that quadrivalent LAIV was well tolerated in children, with a similar AE profile to placebo (148), whilst in a Phase 3 RCT in children 3–17 years of age, trivalent LAIV was associated with a significantly increased incidence of fever compared with placebo (147). In a systematic review and meta-analysis of children <18 years of age, the rate for systemic AEs was not significantly higher with quadrivalent or trivalent LAIVs compared with placebo and trivalent LAIV showed a significantly higher rate for at least one local AE compared with placebo (131).

Alternative platforms to egg-based technologies

Cell-based and recombinant influenza virus vaccines are alternative manufacturing platforms to traditional egg-based vaccines, which have been developed to address issues associated with egg-based vaccines described in the previous section (such as egg adaptation) that reduces vaccine effectiveness (Fig. 3) (109, 217–219). The key characteristics and the clinical data underpinning these technologies are described below.

Cell-based influenza virus vaccines

Technology overview

The manufacturing process for cell-based inactivated influenza virus vaccine uses mammalian cells, e.g., Madin-Darby canine kidney cells, to propagate viruses (Fig. 3). Using this method, candidate vaccine viruses cultivated by the CDC are used to inoculate cultured mammalian cells and allowed to replicate (220, 221). The virus-containing fluid is then collected and the virus antigen is purified (220, 221).

There are several advantages to cell-based technologies over egg-based influenza technologies. For example, cell-based manufacturing uses a more flexible viral production in a cell culture bioreactor, and it has a more scalable technology, a reduced manufacturing time, and a process that is unaffected by potential egg shortages (105). Furthermore, cell-based technologies largely overcome the issues of egg adaptation seen with egg-based influenza manufacturing (222–224). However, cell-based mutations in the HA and NA proteins occur less frequently than mutations in egg-based

TABLE 4 Overview of studies included in the review—adjuvanted inactivated influenza virus vaccines^a

Citation/reference	Evidence type/study design	Vaccine investigated	Control/comparator	Study population	Primary study outcome	Key efficacy result(s) ^b	Key effectiveness result(s) ^b
Children ≥6 months of age							
Vesikari et al. (153)	Multicenter RCT in children over two influenza seasons, from 2013–2015	MF59-adjuvanted vaccine (aQIIV)	IIV (TIIV or QIIV)	Children 6 months to 5 years of age (<i>N</i> = 10,612)	Laboratory (RT-PCR)-confirmed influenza	rVE was −0.67% (95% CI: −19.81, 15.41) in the overall population rVE was 31.37% (95% CI: 3.14, 51.38) in the 6–23 months subgroup	N/A ^c
Loeb et al. (154)	Cluster RCT in children from January 2017 to June 2019	MF59-adjuvanted SD vaccine (aTIIV)	IIV (QIIV)	Children 6 months to 6 years of age and family cluster members who did not receive the study vaccine (<i>N</i> = 1,670)	Laboratory-confirmed (RT-PCR) influenza	rVE against influenza A was 80% (HR: 0.20; 95% CI: 0.06, 0.66) in the vaccinated children	N/A
Adults ≥18 years of age							
Murchu et al. (167)	Systematic review and meta-analysis of RCTs and RWE studies (<i>n</i> = 48)	MF59-adjuvanted vaccine (aTIIV/aQIIV)	IIV (TIIV or QIIV) or no vaccination	Adults ≥18 years of age	Laboratory-confirmed influenza	N/A	VE was 45% (95% CI: 23, 61) for aTIIV vs no vaccination in adults ≥ 65 years of age. VE was 51% (95% CI: 54, 84) for aTIIV vs no vaccination in adults ≥ 18 years of age. In terms rVE, there was no significant difference with aTIIV vs TIIV or QIIV in adults or older adults in five studies.
Adults ≥65 years of age							
Coleman et al. (157)	Systematic review and meta-analysis of RWE from non-interventional studies and cluster RCTs conducted during the 2006/2007–2019/2020 influenza seasons (<i>n</i> = 16).	MF59-adjuvanted vaccine (aTIIV/aQIIV)	No vaccination, SD IIV (TIIV/ QIIV), or HD-TIIV	Adults ≥65 years of age	Outpatient and hospital visits due to laboratory-confirmed influenza	aVE was 40.7% (95% CI: 21.9, 54.9) and 58.5% (95% CI: 40.7, 70.9) for aTIIV (vs no vaccination) in preventing outpatient visits and hospital visits, respectively. rVE was 13.9% (95% CI: 4.2, 23.5; vs TIIV), 13.7% (95% CI: 3.1, 24.2; vs QIIV), and 2.8% (95% CI: −2.9, 8.5; vs HD-TIIV) for aTIIV in preventing influenza-related medical encounters.	N/A
Domnich and de Waure (155)	Systematic review of experimental and observational studies (<i>n</i> = 10) up to April 2022	MF59-adjuvanted SD vaccine (aTIIV)	HD-TIIV	Adults ≥65 years of age	Laboratory-confirmed influenza	N/A	aTIIV more effective (<i>P</i> < 0.05) vs HD-TIIV against all influenza-related medical encounters (hospitalizations, emergency room, and outpatient visits) for influenza (9.7%; 95% CI: 5.0, 14.2). aTIIV was less effective (<i>P</i> < 0.05) vs HD-TIIV against hospitalizations for any respiratory condition (and hospital encounters for

(Continued on next page)

TABLE 4 Overview of studies included in the review—adjuvanted inactivated influenza virus vaccines^a (Continued)

Citation/reference	Evidence type/study design	Vaccine investigated	Control/comparator	Study population	Primary study outcome	Key efficacy result(s) ^b	Key effectiveness result(s) ^b
Gärtner et al. (156)	Systematic review of RWE over the 2006/2007–2008/2009 and 2011/2012–2019/2020 influenza seasons (<i>n</i> = 11 analyses from nine studies)	MF59-adjuvanted SD vaccine (aTIV)	TIV, QIV, and/or Adults ≥65 years of age HD-TIV	Influenza-related outcomes	N/A	coronary artery events (–1.2%; 95% CI: –2.2, –0.2) rVE ranged from 7.5% to 25.6% for aTIV vs TIV and 7.1% to 36.3% for aTIV vs QIV. rVE was 7.7% (95% CI: 2.3, 12.8) for aTIV vs HD-TIV in the 2017/18 season and 6.9% (95% CI: 3.1, 10.6) in the 2018/2019 season	

^aaQIV, adjuvanted quadrivalent inactivated influenza virus vaccine; aTIV, adjuvanted trivalent inactivated influenza virus vaccine; aVE, absolute vaccine effectiveness; CI, confidence interval; HD, high dose; HR, hazard ratio; IV, inactivated influenza virus vaccine; QIV, quadrivalent inactivated influenza virus vaccine; RCT, randomized controlled trial; RT-PCR, reverse transcription PCR; rVE, relative vaccine efficacy/effectiveness; RWE, real-world evidence; SD, standard dose; TIV, trivalent inactivated influenza virus vaccine; VE, vaccine efficacy/effectiveness.

^bPrimary outcome data only reported.
^cN/A, not applicable.

technologies (179, 225, 226). The majority of these mutations occur in either antigenic sites or the receptor-binding site and, if they occur, will therefore likely have a similar effect to that of egg-adapted mutations (179, 225, 226).

Clinical data: efficacy and effectiveness

Influenza virus vaccines produced using cell-based technologies have demonstrated efficacy for laboratory-based influenza both in children and adolescents (2 to <18 years of age) and adults (≥ 18 years of age; Table 6) (160, 161). In an RCT, a QIIV reduced the occurrence of laboratory-confirmed influenza by 54.6% (95% CI: 45.7, 62.1) in children and adolescents (2 to <18 years of age) compared with a non-influenza (meningococcal ACWY) vaccine (160). A systematic review and meta-analysis of 19 studies reported, in data from two RCTs, that the overall absolute vaccine efficacy of trivalent, cell-based vaccines for preventing laboratory-confirmed influenza was 70% (95% CI: 61, 77) in adults (≥ 18 years of age) vs no vaccination (Table 6) (161). Furthermore, in a systematic review and meta-analysis of real-world evidence studies among individuals ≥ 4 years of age, the absolute vaccine effectiveness of a QIIV for preventing laboratory-confirmed influenza across five pooled studies was estimated to be 37.6% (95% CI: 19.4, 55.9) vs 26.1% (95% CI: 6.7, 45.4) for egg-based TIIV/QIIV (162).

Clinical data: safety

A systematic review found that cell-based influenza virus vaccines were associated with significantly higher rates of bruising than traditional egg-based IIV; rates of other local reactions (pain, redness, swelling, and induration) were similar between the two vaccine groups (161).

Recombinant influenza virus vaccines

Technology overview

In contrast to egg-based or cell-based influenza virus vaccines, the antigens contained in a recombinant influenza virus vaccine are expressed directly from a genetic sequence using recombinant protein technology (221, 227, 228); neither chicken eggs nor a candidate vaccine virus are required for production (Fig. 3). For the recombinant influenza virus vaccine, an established manufacturing platform for the production of viral vaccines and gene therapy vectors, the baculovirus expression vector system is used (227–229). First, the influenza HA gene is cloned into the baculovirus genome using homologous recombination (229). The resulting recombinant baculovirus is then transfected into insect cells (227–229).

Once a host insect cell line is transfected by the recombinant baculovirus, it instructs the cells to rapidly produce the HA antigen (Fig. 3). As the HA antigen is expressed directly from a genetic sequence, rather than derived from the replication of influenza viruses in eggs or mammalian cells, potential egg-adaptive and cell-adaptive mutations from the manufacturing process of recombinant vaccines are avoided (228). Therefore, the expressed HA antigen is genetically identical to a chosen influenza strain, e.g., the seasonal strain recommended by the WHO. The recombinant vaccine currently available contains only HA at a concentration three times higher than standard-dose egg-based vaccines (45 μ g) which, together with restriction of mutations, may have contributed to a higher vaccine efficacy than a standard-dose-egg-based QIIV, as demonstrated in clinical trials (227).

Production of influenza virus vaccines using recombinant technologies takes less time (2–3 months) than with egg-based vaccines (175), and recombinant vaccines do not require additional inactivation steps. Furthermore, unlike egg-based vaccines, recombinant vaccines contain no trace egg proteins, antibiotics, or preservatives (228), making them suitable for all people with egg allergy, including those who have experienced severe egg anaphylactic reactions.

TABLE 5 Overview of studies included in the review—live-attenuated influenza virus vaccines^a

Citation/reference	Evidence type/study design	Vaccine investigated	Control/comparator	Study population	Primary study outcome	Key efficacy result(s) ^b	Key effectiveness result(s) ^b
Children and infants ≥6 months of age							
Morimoto et al. (149)	Systematic review and meta-analysis of eight RCTs conducted during 10 influenza seasons	LAIV	Subjects who were vaccinated for one season and not for the previous season (single vaccine group)	Children 6 months to 11 years of age	11 Medically attended influenza according to antigenic matching and to whether the subject received the vaccine for two consecutive seasons (multiple vaccine group)	RR (multiple vs single) for children with antigenic match: 0.61 (95% CI: 0.24, 1.57). RR (multiple vs single) for children with antigenic mismatch: 2.03 (95% CI: 1.20, 3.41)	N/A ^c
Boddington et al. (140)	Systematic review and meta-analysis of 37 test-negative studies published up to June 2020	LAIV	Not specified	Children 6 months to 17 years of age	17 Laboratory-confirmed influenza-associated hospitalization	N/A	VE of 44.3% (95% CI: 30.1, 55.7)
Children >2 years of age							
Mallory et al. (148)	Two RCTs in Japan during the 2014–2015 influenza season	LAIV (quadrivalent)	Study 1: uncontrolled single arm Study 2: Placebo	Children 2–6 years of age in study 1 (N = 100) and 7–18 years of age in study 2 (N = 1,301)	Laboratory (PCR)-confirmed influenza caused by vaccine-matched strains	Study 2: VE for vaccine-matched strains was 100% (95% CI: –187.5, 100); VE for all influenza strains, regardless of match to the vaccine, was 27.5% (95% CI: 7.4, 43.0)	N/A
Jefferson et al. (164, 165)	Cochrane review of 41 RCTs published up to July 2017	LAIV	Placebo or no vaccination	Children 3–16 years of age	Laboratory-confirmed influenza (viral isolation, serological supporting evidence, or both) and ILI	VE for laboratory-confirmed influenza of LAIV vs control was 78% [RR: 0.22 (95% CI: 0.11, 0.41)] in children 3 to 16 years of age VE for ILI of LAIV vs control was 31% (95% CI: 20, 40) in children 3–16 years of age Consolidated VE of 69% (95% CI: 46, 82) against all influenza strains	LAIV vs control was 78% [RR: 0.22 (95% CI: 0.11, 0.41)] in children 3 to 16 years of age VE for ILI of LAIV vs control was 31% (95% CI: 20, 40) in children 3–16 years of age Consolidated VE of 69% (95% CI: 46, 82) against all influenza strains
Mallory et al. (140, 141)	Systematic review and meta-analysis of five studies during the 2016–2017 season	LAIV (quadrivalent)	Not specified	Children 2–17 years of age	Laboratory (PCR-, culture-, or antigen)-confirmed influenza	VE of 62.5% (95% CI: 27.6, 80.6) against all influenza strains, and 63.3% (95% CI: 27.5, 81.5) against H3N2	N/A
Wang et al. (147)	RCT in China during the 2016–2017 influenza season	LAIV	Placebo	Chinese children 3–17 years of age (N = 1,999)	Laboratory-confirmed (RT-PCR) influenza	VE of 62.5% (95% CI: 27.6, 80.6) against all influenza strains, and 63.3% (95% CI: 27.5, 81.5) against H3N2	N/A
Krishnan et al. (146)	RCT in rural India over 2 years (2015–2017)	LAIV	TIIV, placebo, or IPV	Children 2–10 years of age (N = 3,041)	Laboratory (rRT-PCR)-confirmed influenza	In year 1, VE was 40.0% (95% CI: 25.2, 51.9) for LAIV vs placebo; rVE of LAIV vs TIV was –46.2% (95% CI: –88.9, –13.1) In year 2, VE was 51.9% (95% CI: 42.0, 60.1) for LAIV vs placebo; rVE of LAIV vs TIV was 4.2% (95% CI: –19.9, 23.5)	Not reported
Children <18 years of age and adults and elderly adults ≥61 years of age							

(Continued on next page)

TABLE 5 Overview of studies included in the review—live-attenuated influenza virus vaccines^a (Continued)

Citation/reference	Evidence type/study design	Vaccine investigated	Control/comparator	Study population	Primary study outcome	Key efficacy result(s) ^b	Key effectiveness result(s) ^b
Minozzi et al. (131)	Systematic review and meta-analysis of 220 RCTs published up to December 2020	LAIV (trivalent/quadrivalent)	SD-TiIV, HD-TiIV, aTiIV, aQIV, TiVr, QIVr, or placebo (no vaccination or non-influenza virus vaccine)	Children <18 years of age (N = 100,677); adults 18–60 years of age and elderly adults ≥61 years of age (N = 329,127)	Laboratory-confirmed influenza	In children: rVE for trivalent LAIV vs SD-TiIV was 48% (95% CrI: 18, 68). In adults and elderly adults: rVE for trivalent LAIV vs placebo was 44% (95% CrI: 26, 59). rVE for trivalent LAIV vs SD-TiIV was –41% (95% CrI: –29, –4)	N/A

^aAE, adverse event; aQIV, adjuvanted quadrivalent influenza virus vaccine; aVE, absolute vaccine effectiveness; CI, confidence interval; HD, high dose; LAIV, live-attenuated influenza virus vaccine; IPV, inactivated polio vaccine; QIVr, recombinant quadrivalent influenza virus vaccine; RCT, randomized controlled trial; RR, relative risk; rRT-PCR, real-time reverse transcription PCR; RT-PCR, reverse transcription PCR; rVE, relative vaccine efficacy/effectiveness; SAE, serious adverse event; SD, standard dose; TiV, trivalent influenza virus vaccine; TiVr, recombinant trivalent influenza virus vaccine; VE, vaccine efficacy/effectiveness.

^bPrimary outcome data only reported.

^cN/A, not applicable.

Clinical data: efficacy and effectiveness

One study identified in a systematic review (158) found that a recombinant TIIIV demonstrated a 45% (95% CI: 19, 63) relative vaccine efficacy, compared with placebo, against laboratory-confirmed influenza in adults 18–55 years of age (Table 7) (230). Another RCT from this systematic review found that a recombinant QIIIV had a higher relative vaccine efficacy in preventing laboratory-confirmed influenza compared with a standard-dose egg-based QIIIV among adults ≥ 50 years of age (relative vaccine efficacy of 30%; 95% CI: 10, 47; one RCT, moderate-certainty evidence Table 7) (158). In a systematic review and network meta-analysis of 41 RCTs, recombinant TIIIVs/QIIIVs had a vaccine efficacy of 70.6% (95% CI: 22.9, 90.2; nine RCTs) against laboratory-confirmed influenza when compared with placebo (Table 7) (169). Findings from a cluster-randomized observational study demonstrated a relative vaccine effectiveness against laboratory-confirmed influenza of 15.3% (95% CI: 5.9, 23.8) for recombinant QIIIV vs a standard-dose egg-based vaccine in adults 50–64 years of age (Table 7) (171).

Clinical data: safety

A systematic review and meta-analysis demonstrated similar rates of fatigue, headache, myalgia, or nausea between a recombinant influenza virus vaccine and traditional QIIIV (158) but a significantly higher rate of chills with the recombinant vaccine (158). There were significantly fewer local reactions, including pain, erythema, swelling, and tenderness, with the recombinant vaccine compared with IIV (158).

FUTURE VACCINE TECHNOLOGIES

Introduction

The main focus of this review article is on the clinical data supporting the development of the six influenza vaccine types currently available in the UK. However, in this final section, we present a brief overview of future influenza virus vaccine technologies. The development of the previously described “new” technologies for influenza virus vaccines, as well as an increased antigen dose, has provided valuable improvements for influenza prevention compared with standard-dose egg-based technologies. Not all vaccine technologies have been investigated for clinical outcomes (i.e., influenza virus infection or hospitalizations) in head-to-head randomized efficacy trials in which the comparator is the standard of care, standard-dose egg-based vaccines. However, for those vaccine technologies that have been investigated in this way, vaccine efficacy for the prevention of laboratory-confirmed influenza, relative to standard-dose egg-based vaccines, still remains moderate overall, estimated at up to 30% (95% CI: 10, 47) in adults (Tables 3 to 7) (131, 152, 157, 158, 163). The overall effectiveness of influenza virus vaccines remains largely below that of vaccines for other vaccine-preventable infectious diseases. For example, vaccine effectiveness is $>90\%$ for vaccines that prevent measles infection (231) and is up to 100% for the prevention of meningococcal disease with meningococcal C conjugate vaccines (232). In comparison, vaccine effectiveness against all laboratory-confirmed influenza presenting within primary care in the UK is 49% (95% CI: 42, 56) in adults 18–64 years of age and 46% (95% CI: 29, 59) in adults ≥ 65 years of age (233). Vaccine effectiveness against influenza-related hospitalization in England could also be improved, with vaccine effectiveness of 54% (95% CI: 42, 63), 31% (95% CI: 21, 40) and 30% (95% CI: 22, 37) in individuals 2–17 years, 18–64 years, and ≥ 65 years of age, respectively (vaccine effectiveness data in Scotland are grouped with other respiratory conditions and are not available for Wales and Northern Ireland) (233). Similar influenza virus vaccine effectiveness has been reported in the US, with 33% (95% CI: 16, 47) to 49% (95% CI: 47, 51) against laboratory-confirmed influenza in outpatient settings and 41% (95% CI: 34, 47) to 44% (95% CI: 32, 54) against influenza-associated hospitalization (234). Therefore, there remains an unmet need for the development of additional technologies that may overcome some of the shortcomings associated with current technologies and

TABLE 6 Overview of studies included in the review—cell-based inactivated influenza virus vaccines (IIVCs)^a

Citation/reference	Evidence type/study design	Vaccine investigated	Control/comparator	Study population	Primary study outcome	Key efficacy result(s) ^b	Key effectiveness result(s) ^b
Individuals ≥6 months of age							
Coleman et al. (162)	Systematic review and meta-analysis of RWE studies (<i>n</i> = 18) over three influenza seasons from 2017–2020	QIVc	No vaccination, TIIvE, or QIIVe	Individuals ≥6 months of age	Laboratory-confirmed influenza	N/A ^c	Pooled aVE was 37.6% (95% CI: 19.4, 55.9) for QIIVc vs 26.1% (95% CI: 6.7, 45.4) for TIIvE/QIIVe (<i>n</i> = 5 studies). The overall rVE was 8.4% (95% CI: 6.5, 10.2) for QIIVc vs TIIvE/QIIVe (across all studies). In individuals 4–64 years of age, pooled rVE was 16.2% (95% CI: 7.6, 24.8) for 2017–2018, 6.1% (95% CI: 4.9, 7.3) for 2018–2019, and 10.1% (95% CI: 6.3, 14.0) for 2019–2020. In adults ≥ 65 years of age pooled rVE was 9.9% (95% CI: 6.9, 12.9) for 2017–2018, and –0.8 (95% CI: –3.5, 1.8) for 2018–2019.
Children and adolescents 2–17 years of age							
Nolan et al. (160)	Multicenter RCT across three influenza seasons from 2017 to 2019	QIVc	Meningococcal ACWY vaccine	Children and adolescents 2 to <18 years of age (<i>N</i> = 4,514)	Laboratory (RT-PCR and viral culture)-confirmed influenza	VE for QIIVc of 54.6% (95% CI: 45.7, 62.1)	N/A
Adults ≥18 years of age							
Puig-Barberà et al. (163)	Systematic review and meta-analysis of studies (<i>n</i> = 12)	IIVcc	IIVe	Adults ≥18 years of age	Laboratory-confirmed influenza	N/A	Adjusted rVE for IIVcc vs IIVe of 11% (95% CI: 8, 14) in 2017–2018 influenza season and 3% (95% CI: –2, 7) in 2018–2019 influenza season
Jordan et al. (158, 161)	Systematic review of RCTs and non-randomized intervention studies (<i>n</i> = 19)	TIIvC/QIIVc	Efficacy: placebo Effectiveness: no vaccination or IIV	Adults ≥18 years of age	Laboratory-confirmed influenza	VE of 70.1% (95% CI: 60.7, 77.3) vs placebo in adults 18–49 years of age (<i>n</i> = 2 RCTs)	In adults ≥18 years, OR of 0.21 (95% CI: –0.12, –0.44) and 0.52 (95% CI: 0.36, 0.64) vs no vaccination (<i>n</i> = 2 RCTs) In adults ≥ 65 years, OR of 0.10 (95% CI: –0.44, 0.44) vs no vaccination and OR of 0.06 (95% CI: –0.46, 0.39) vs IIV

^aAE, adverse event; aVE, absolute vaccine effectiveness; CI, confidence interval; IIV, inactivated influenza virus vaccine; IIVcc, seed cell cultured inactivated influenza virus vaccine; IIVe, egg-based inactivated influenza virus vaccine; OR, odds ratio; QIIVc, cell-based quadrivalent inactivated influenza virus vaccine; QIIVe, egg-based quadrivalent inactivated influenza virus vaccine; RCT, randomized controlled trial; RT-PCR, reverse transcription PCR; rVE, relative vaccine efficacy/effectiveness; RWE, real-world evidence; SD, standard dose; TIIvC, cell-based trivalent inactivated influenza virus vaccine; TIIvE, egg-based trivalent inactivated influenza virus vaccine; VE, vaccine efficacy/effectiveness.

^bPrimary outcome data only reported.

^cN/A, not applicable.

improve influenza virus vaccine efficacy. Here, we present a short overview of various technologies that are currently being developed or are in pre-licensure clinical trials.

Nucleic acid technologies, viral vectors, and recombinant virus-like particles

Technology overview: nucleic acid technologies

Vaccines based on nucleic acids (DNA and RNA) have been in development since the 1990s and offer considerable potential to overcome the limitations of established vaccine platforms (235–237). DNA vaccines differ from the previously discussed recombinant vaccines in that they deliver DNA, rather than recombinant antigen (228, 235, 237). In 2021, a DNA plasmid-based SARS-CoV-2 vaccine (ZyCoV-D) was approved in India for active immunization to prevent COVID-19 in individuals ≥ 12 years of age (238–240), suggesting that the technology may be appropriate for other respiratory infectious diseases, such as influenza.

The mRNA contained within mRNA-based vaccines encodes the viral protein that elicits the immune response (Fig. 3) (241). Processes involved in the production of mRNA vaccines vary, but typical steps are as follows: the antigen of interest is sequenced, and the optimized consensus sequence is used to create a linearized plasmid DNA template, which is then amplified and purified (241–243). This DNA template is then used as the basis for the synthesis of the target mRNA for the antigen by RNA polymerase enzymes (244). Finally, purified mRNAs are encapsulated into a lipid nanoparticle for delivery (245). A critical step for mRNA vaccine immunogenicity and efficacy is the incorporation of modified nucleotides (246), which can reduce the cell intrinsic response to the mRNA itself (247).

mRNA-based vaccines offer several benefits over traditional technologies, including a short manufacturing time that would accelerate production and availability of a vaccine, particularly during a pandemic (248–251). Furthermore, shorter manufacturing times could mean that mRNA vaccines are developed closer to the start of an influenza season to reduce time-lag and the potential for antigenic mismatch before or during the season, though there would also be considerations regarding rapid licensure and distribution.

Clinical data

A number of DNA influenza virus vaccines are being investigated in Phase 1 clinical trials (252–258). The results from a Phase 1 study of pandemic H1 DNA vaccine showed that it was well tolerated in healthy adults (24–70 years of age) (253). The H1 DNA vaccine demonstrated modest immunogenicity when administered as a single agent (prime vaccination) (253). DNA vaccines may also offer a potential strategy to improve the immunogenicity of current influenza virus vaccines, as evidenced in studies with influenza DNA vaccine prime followed by inactivated vaccine boost (257, 258). In Phase 1 clinical trial, H5 DNA priming followed by administration of a monovalent inactivated vaccine boost ≥ 12 weeks later, resulted in fourfold increases in hemagglutination inhibition (HAI) titer in 91% of recipients (257).

Several mRNA influenza virus vaccine candidates are currently being investigated (259–271). The final results of Phase 1/2 clinical trial in healthy adults ≥ 18 years of age demonstrated that a quadrivalent mRNA vaccine against seasonal influenza, mRNA-1010, at 25–100 μg has a higher immunogenicity for influenza A virus and similar immunogenicity for influenza B compared with SD-IIV through 6 months after vaccination (272). Lower doses of mRNA-1010 elicited generally higher (12.5 and 25 μg) or comparable (6.25 μg) titers to SD-IIV for influenza A virus strains but lower for influenza B strains (272). Solicited adverse reactions were more common with mRNA-1010 than with a licensed, seasonal QIV and were typically grade 1 or grade 2 in severity (272). Phase 3 trials to assess the safety and efficacy of mRNA-1010 are ongoing (259, 260).

Two Phase 1, randomized, placebo-controlled, double-blind, clinical trials were conducted to evaluate the safety and immunogenicity of the first mRNA vaccines against avian H10N8 and H7N9 influenza viruses, which have the potential to cause a pandemic (273). The vaccines were well tolerated and elicited robust humoral immune responses in healthy adults (273). Future studies investigating different valences will need to assess

the tolerability of larger doses of RNA vaccines to determine whether multiple antigens can be delivered.

Technology overview: viral vectors

Viral vector vaccines contain genomes that have been modified with genes encoding target antigens from specific pathogens (274). The advantages of viral vectors include the ability to elicit both antibody and cellular responses—the latter of which is important for the elimination of pathogen-infected cells—and to induce long-lasting immune responses (275). Viral vector vaccines offer similar advantages to mRNA vaccines, including the ability to replace the HA cassette rapidly. However, there are potential challenges of anti-vector immunity, especially with repeat immunizations (274, 276).

Clinical data

Results from a Phase 1 study to evaluate the safety and immunogenicity of an adenovirus vector encoding the HA gene of H1N1 influenza showed a fourfold increase in HAI titers in 83% of the participants after booster vaccination (277). Phases 1–3 clinical studies have been conducted for other infectious diseases (278), including Phase 3 trials for chimpanzee adenovirus ChAdOX1 as a delivery vector for the coronavirus S gene, achieving 70% (96% CI: 55, 81) efficacy against virologically confirmed COVID-19 (279). Further clinical trials of viral vector influenza vaccines in humans should provide insight into whether this approach will be more effective than conventional vaccines.

Technology overview: recombinant virus-like particles

Another new technology currently in development for influenza virus vaccines is recombinant virus-like particles (VLPs) prepared in mammalian, insect, and plant expression systems (280–282). The biological and morphological characteristics of recombinant VLPs are similar to the wild-type influenza virus (283), thus avoiding the drawbacks associated with antigenic drift. VLPs consist of a viral capsid without the core viral RNA required for replication (283). Therefore, although VLPs contain immunological epitopes and are highly immunogenic, they are not infectious (283).

Clinical data

Multimeric-001 is a vaccine formulated with conserved linear epitopes derived from influenza type A and type B proteins that play pivotal roles in viral infection (284). Results from a Phase 2, randomized, double-blind placebo-controlled trial in healthy adults showed that Multimeric-001 induced a polyfunctional CD4⁺ T cell response that persisted through 6 months of follow-up (285). In two Phase 3 RCTs, a plant-derived VLP influenza virus vaccine demonstrated substantial protection against ILI compared with placebo in adults (282). In the study with adults 18–64 years of age, the primary endpoint of 70% absolute vaccine efficacy to prevent laboratory-confirmed influenza with respiratory illness for the VLP vaccine vs placebo was not met [35.1% (95% CI: 17.9, 48.7)]. The study in adults ≥65 years of age met its primary non-inferiority endpoint of prevention of ILI; relative vaccine efficacy of the VLP vaccine vs an inactivated vaccine control was 8.8% (95% CI: –16.7, 28.7) (282).

Bi- and tri-pathogen immunization strategies

Combination vaccines reduce the number of injections required to protect against multiple diseases and may increase adherence to immunization schedules (286). Combination vaccines, for example, DTaP (diphtheria, tetanus toxoid, and acellular pertussis) and MMR (measles, mumps, and rubella) have long been available (286). More recently, following two Phase 1/2 RCTs conducted to investigate a combination of both influenza and COVID-19 vaccine components in an mRNA vaccine (287, 288), a Phase 3 trial successfully demonstrated greater efficacy at eliciting an immune response against both viruses in

TABLE 7 Overview of studies included in the review—recombinant influenza virus vaccines^a

Citation/ reference	Evidence type/study design	Vaccine investigated	Control/ comparator	Study population	Primary study outcome	Key efficacy result(s) ^b	Key effectiveness result(s) ^b
Adults ≥18 years of age							
Evans et al. (159)	Phase 2b RCT during April and October 2019	MVA-NP+M1	Placebo (saline)	Non-immuno-suppressed adults ≥18 years of age who received the 2019 QIV within 28 days of randomization (N = 2,152)	Laboratory-confirmed influenza	Incidence of laboratory-confirmed influenza was 3.25% (95% CI: 2.31, 4.44) for MVA-NP+M1 vs 2.14% (95% CI: 1.39, 3.14) for placebo (Fisher's exact, <i>P</i> = 0.14)	N/A ^c
Murchu et al. (158)	Systematic review of RCTs and non-randomized intervention studies (<i>n</i> = 10) up to February 2020	TIVr/QIVr	TIV, QIV, or placebo	Adults ≥18 years of age	Laboratory-confirmed influenza	rVE of 30% (95% CI: 10, 47) for QIVr vs QIV in adults ≥50 years of age during the 2014–2015 influenza season (<i>n</i> = 1 RCT) rVE of 44.6% (95% CI: 18.8, 62.6) for TIVr vs placebo in adults 18–55 years of age during the 2007–2008 influenza season (<i>n</i> = 1 RCT)	N/A
Hsiao et al. (171)	Cluster-randomized observational study including adults 18–64 years of age	QIVr	SD-QIV	Adults 18–64 years of age (<i>N</i> = 1,630,328)	Laboratory-confirmed influenza	N/A	rVE of 15.3% (95% CI: 5.9, 23.8; <i>P</i> = 0.002) vs SD-QIV in participants aged 50–64 years of age (<i>n</i> = 675,252)
Veroniki et al. (169)	Systematic review and meta-analysis of studies including adults ≥60 years (<i>n</i> = 41)	TIVr/QIVr (combined)	Placebo	Adults ≥60 years of age	Laboratory-confirmed influenza	VE of 70.6% (95% CI: 22.9, 90.2) vs placebo (pairwise and network meta-analysis, <i>n</i> = 9 RCTs)	N/A

^aCI, confidence interval; IIV, inactivated influenza virus vaccine; ILI, influenza-like illness; MVA-NP+M1, modified vaccinia Ankara expressing virus nucleoprotein and matrix protein 1; QIV, quadrivalent inactivated influenza virus vaccine; QIVr, recombinant quadrivalent influenza virus vaccine; RCT, randomized controlled trial; RR, relative risk; rVE, relative vaccine efficacy/effectiveness; SAE, serious adverse event; SD, standard dose; TIV, trivalent inactivated influenza virus vaccine; TIVr, recombinant trivalent influenza virus vaccine.

^bPrimary outcome data only reported.

^cN/A, not applicable.

adults ≥ 50 years of age compared with vaccines that targeted only one (289, 290). Future developments may also include combination vaccines that offer protection from influenza, COVID-19, and respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) in a single formulation (286). Decisions regarding the strains of SARS-CoV-2 and influenza virus to be included in combination winter vaccines should be coordinated to optimize production.

Potential for a universal influenza virus vaccine

The risk of antigenic reassortment leading to a reduction in vaccine effectiveness necessitates regular surveillance of circulating influenza viruses and reformulation of vaccines each influenza season (291–294). Predicting the circulating influenza strain for future influenza seasons is difficult, and antigenic mismatch sometimes occurs. Furthermore, there is always a risk of emergence of a pandemic influenza virus, either as a result of new, pathogenic reassortants or zoonotic events in which highly pathogenic avian influenza viruses, such as H5N1, H7N9, and H9N2, are transmitted to humans (with additional genetic changes facilitating human-to-human transmission) (295). Following such events, current vaccines would likely offer little or no protection in an ensuing pandemic.

As such, there is a need for the development of “next-generation” universal influenza virus vaccines to protect against a wide variety of influenza subtypes—including both drifted or heterologous seasonal influenza virus strains and new emerging strains that could potentially lead to a pandemic. Several candidates for universal influenza virus vaccines are in clinical development (296). One approach is to introduce new antigenic targets related to highly conserved and stable epitopes of the influenza virus HA stem domain, as opposed to the highly variable HA head (295, 297). In addition to broadening protection, targeting conserved epitopes for vaccination may also increase the duration of protection. Other universal vaccine technologies include chimeric HA vaccines, which have shown the potential to provide broad protection against influenza viruses in a Phase 1 RCT (298).

A design of vaccines that are not pathogen specific was recently proposed using a concept termed “integrated organ immunity” (299). This involves innate and adaptive immune systems and non-hematopoietic cells interacting in tissue to elicit lasting, antigen-agnostic immunity (299).

CONCLUDING REMARKS

With an estimated 15,000 excess deaths reported in England alone in the 2022/23 UK influenza season, mostly among adults ≥ 65 years of age (9), effective influenza prevention may impact the disease burden and associated healthcare costs (300). Seasonal influenza virus vaccination is effective at preventing illness and reducing the severity of the disease (48, 49, 301), and influenza virus vaccines have been widely used for over 60 years for the immunization of high-risk population subgroups (11). Most vaccines are manufactured using egg-based inactivated influenza technology, but over the past decade, advances in vaccine technologies have seen the licensure of different technologies, resulting in improved immunogenicity and efficacy in certain patient subgroups. This is the result of many decades of research and development, which is still ongoing, testing new and existing formulations and platforms to develop the most effective influenza virus vaccinations. This is of particular importance in certain population groups at risk due to underlying conditions, especially those with immunosenescence where the protective responses induced by seasonal influenza virus vaccination are blunted (192, 193). In the UK, non-adjuvanted egg-based vaccines have now been relegated to reserve use, only if there are shortages of primary recommended products (77).

Each influenza virus vaccine technology has its own advantages and constraints regarding manufacturing time and cost, influenza strain selection and matching to the seasonal circulating strains, cell- and egg-adaptation leading to mutations of grown viruses, and immunogenicity and reactogenicity profiles. We have summarized key aspects relating to each influenza virus vaccine technology and reviewed the associated

clinical data. Despite the advances in technology, there remains an unmet need for influenza virus vaccines that are effective against multiple circulating strains; such vaccines would maximize population protection.

There are some limitations to our review. The inclusion criteria for the literature search focused specifically on RCTs, systematic reviews, and meta-analyses, and so the data reviewed and summarized are biased toward these forms of evidence. Therefore, real-world studies were not included in the literature search. Importantly, however, several systematic reviews and meta-analyses in our search included real-world studies (132, 140, 150, 155–157, 162, 163, 185). In addition, there may have been studies published after the search period for our literature search that have therefore been omitted from this review. However, to our knowledge, this is the first comprehensive review of the new influenza virus vaccine technologies, situated against the clinical efficacy and effectiveness data, relating to influenza virus infections and hospitalizations. As such, the review should provide a useful resource for those interested in understanding more about advances in influenza virus vaccination.

The introduction of new influenza virus vaccine technologies highlights the need for robust and consistent methods to assess the performance of influenza virus vaccinations and immunization programs, particularly in relation to vaccine effectiveness, which may have a substantial impact on public health and on healthcare systems. It is important that national guidelines follow evidence-based criteria for the assessment of influenza virus vaccine effectiveness, taking into account the robustness of study designs. Recent developments in standardized immunological assays and identification of new immune markers as correlates of clinical protection need to be translated into vaccine development so that pandemic vaccines are not reliant on strain matching, a process that may take approximately 6 months and can result in substantial morbidity and mortality before vaccine availability (121, 122).

The recent step change in influenza virus vaccination technologies that are recommended in the UK was motivated by the substantial public health burden of influenza at both a patient and a population level. Ongoing assessment of comparative (product-specific) and programmatic vaccine effectiveness, using robust methodologies, will facilitate recommendation of the most effective vaccines. Continued investment in research and development and demonstration of clinical efficacy of new and existing vaccine technologies will further enhance the existing UK vaccination program.

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ADDITIONAL FILES

The following material is available [online](#).

Supplemental Material

Supplemental Material (CMR00025-24-s0001.docx). Table S1 (search strategy), Table S2 (eligibility criteria for selection of articles), Figure S1 (article selection flowchart).

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