



Respiratory Syncytial Virus-Associated Hospital Admissions and Bed Days in Children <5 Years of Age in 7 European Countries

Respiratory Syncytial Virus Consortium in Europe (RESCEU) Investigators ; Wang, Xin; Li, You; Vazquez Fernandez, Liliana; Teirlinck, Anne C.; Lehtonen, Toni; van Wijhe, Maarten; Stona, Luca; Bangert, Mathieu; Reeves, Rachel M.; Bøås, Håkon; van Boven, Michiel; Heikkinen, Terho; Klint Johannesen, Caroline; Baraldi, Eugenio; Donà, Daniele; Tong, Sabine: Campbell, Harry: Simonsen, Lone

Published in: The Journal of Infectious Diseases

DOI: 10.1093/infdis/jiab560

Publication date: 2022

Document Version Peer reviewed version

Citation for published version (APA):

Respiratory Syncytial Virus Consortium in Europe (RESCEU) Investigators, Wang, X., Li, Y., Vazquez Fernandez, L., Teirlinck, A. C., Lehtonen, T., van Wijhe, M., Stona, L., Bangert, M., Reeves, R. M., Bøås, H., van Boven, M., Heikkinen, T., Klint Johannesen, C., Baraldi, E., Donà, D., Tong, S., Campbell, H., & Simonsen, L. (2022). Respiratory Syncytial Virus-Associated Hospital Admissions and Bed Days in Children <5 Years of Age in 7 European Countries. The Journal of Infectious Diseases, 226(1), S22-S28. https://doi.org/10.1093/infdis/jiab560

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Respiratory syncytial virus-associated hospital admissions and bed days in children under 5

years in 7 European countries

Running title: respiratory syncytial virus in Europe

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ACEPTERMANUSCA

Abstract

Background

Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) is a leading cause of respiratory tract infections (RTI) in young children. High-quality country-specific estimates of bed days and length of stay (LOS) show the direct and indirect burden of RSV-RTI on secondary care services, and can be used to inform RSV immunisation implementation decisions.

Methods

We estimated the hospital burden of RSV-associated RTI (RSV-RTI) in children under 5 years in 7 European countries (Finland, Denmark, Norway, Scotland, England, the Netherlands and Italy) using routinely collected hospital databases during 2001-2018. We described RSV-RTI admission rates during the first year of life by birth month and assessed their correlation with RSV seasonality in 5 of the countries (except for England and Italy). We estimated average annual numbers and rates of bed days for RSV-RTI and other-pathogen-RTI, as well as the hospital LOS. Results

We found that infants born 2 months before the peak month of RSV epidemics more frequently had the highest RSV-RTI hospital admission rate . RSV-RTI hospital episodes accounted for 9.9 to 21.2 bed days per 1,000 children under 5 years annually, with the median (interquartile range; IQR) LOS ranging from 2 days (0.5-4 days) to 4 days (2-6 days) between countries. Between 70% and 89% of these bed days were in infants <1 year, representing 40.3 (95% CI 40.1-40.4) -91.2 (95% CI 90.6-91.8) bed days per 1,000 infants annually. The number of bed days for RSV-RTI was higher than that for RTI associated with other pathogens in infants <1 year, especially in those <6 months.

Discussion

RSV disease prevention therapies (monoclonal antibodies and maternal vaccines) for infants could help prevent a substantial number of bed days due to RSV-RTI. "High-risk" birth months should be considered when developing RSV immunisation schedules. Viariation in LOS between countries might reflect differences in hospital care practices.

Key words: respiratory syncytial virus; hospital admission; bed days; birth month; Europe.

Word count: abstract 299; main text 2760

1 Introduction

2 Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) is a leading cause of respiratory tract infections (RTI) in young 3 children, causing an estimated 3.2 million hospital admissions and 118,000 deaths in children 4 under 5 years globally in 2015 [1]. Currently, treatments for RSV are mainly supportive and there is no vaccine for RSV yet, though a monoclonal antibody (palivizumab) is currently 5 available for use in high-risk children to prevent severe RSV infection [2, 3]. A number of RSV 6 7 vaccine and monoclonal antibody candidates are being developed. In the recent phase 3 trial, 8 the effect of a RSV F maternal vaccine did not meet the primary endpoint, but showed the efficacy of 44% against the additional endpoint - RSV-associated RTI hospitalisation [4]. Two 9 other maternal vaccines and one monoclonal antibody targeting the paediatric population are 10 currently under assessment in phase 3 trials [2, 4-6]. Given the recent progress in the 11 development of RSV interventions, high-quality country-specific burden estimates are 12 13 warranted to inform national RSV intervention implementation strategies in a timely manner. We have previously shown that average annual RSV-RTI admission rates ranged from 8.6 to 14 22.3 per 1,000 children aged <1 year in 7 European countries, and ranged from 0.3-2.1 per 15 1,000 children aged 1-4 years [7]. In this analysis, we build on the previous work to further 16 17 estimate the number and rate of bed days and length of stay (LOS) for RSV-RTI admission in the 18 selected European countries and the risk factors for prolonged hospital stay at RSV-RTI 19 admission [8]. The estimates of bed days and LOS demonstrate the direct and indirect burden 20 of RSV-RTI on country secondary care services respectively, and show the disease severity of 21 RSV-RTI in risk groups. Estimates of bed days can be used directly in cost-effectiveness analysis 22 to evaluate new interventions and intervention strategies [9].

23 It is well known that infants have the highest RSV infection rate. In addition to young age, the 24 timing of birth is also shown to be associated with risk of RSV infection in the first year of life 25 [10-16]. This is possibly because infants born in different time of a year are at different ages 26 during the RSV epidemic, and age is a key factor influencing the risk of severe RSV infection [7]. In the European setting [10, 11, 13, 16], most of the previous studies on the association 27 28 between timing of birth and RSV infection rates were small in size, had short observation 29 periods (2-4 years) and did not report nationally representative data. In this report we describe RSV-RTI admission rates by birth month during the first year of life using national hospital 30 databases available in 5 European countries and assess how it is related to the RSV seasonal 31 series in time with the aim of providing data to inform future RSV immunisation schedule 32 33 optimization.

34 Methods

35 Study design and data sources

36 The study design and data sources have been described previously [7]. Briefly, we conducted a retrospective study of overall RTI hospital admissions (i.e., RTI with or without an associated 37 pathogen), RSV-RTI admissions, and other pathogen-RTI admissions in children under 5 years of 38 39 age using routinely collected hospital admissions databases in 7 countries in the European 40 Union/European Economic Area (appendix Table S1). We used national hospital registries for 41 Scotland (2001-2016), Denmark (2001-2017), Finland (2001-2017), the Netherlands (2013-42 2017), and Norway (2008-2017). For England, we used Clinical Practice Research Datalink linked 43 to Hospital Episode Statistics (2007-2017). We used subnational hospital admissions data for

| 44 | the Veneto Region of Italy (2012-2018), with an estimated average population of about 226,800 |
|----|---|
| 45 | children under 5 years per year (accounting for about 9% of the children under 5 years in Italy). |
| 46 | As used in our previous paper [7], we defined RSV-RTI and other-pathogen-RTI admissions |
| 47 | based on International Classification of Diseases (ICD-9-CM or ICD-10) diagnosis codes (for full |
| 48 | code lists see appendix Table S2). RTI admission was defined as an admission with any mention |
| 49 | of RTI in the diagnosis codes. RSV-RTI admission was an RTI admission with any mention of a |
| 50 | RSV diagnosis code; other-pathogen-RTI admission was an RTI admission with any mention of a |
| 51 | pathogen-specific diagnosis code. For the Veneto Region of Italy, we only presented data on |
| 52 | RSV-RTI as data on other-pathogen-RTI were unavailable. |
| 53 | Statistical analysis |
| 54 | We estimated RSV-RTI admission rates in the first year of life by birth month in Scotland, |
| 55 | Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands and Norway. For this analysis, the numerator was the |
| 56 | number of RSV-RTI admissions during the first year of life in infants born in each month, and |
| 57 | the denominator was the number of live births per month (thus refered as "birth cohort" |
| 58 | series) [17-20]. We assessed the cross-correlation between the "birth cohort" series and the |
| 59 | RSV seasonal series in each country at time lags from -5 months to 5 months using the |
| 60 | Pearson's correlation. The RSV seasonal series was shown using the annualised RSV-RTI hospital |
| 61 | admission rates by calendar month. |
| 62 | We estimated the average annual number of bed days in children under 5 years for RSV-RTI and |
| 63 | other-pathogen-RTI in the countries where data were available. The number of bed days was |
| 64 | assumed 0.5 days when the admission and discharge were on the same day. Where available, |

65 overnight hospital stay <24 hours was considered to be equivalent to 1 bed day as its cost is

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66 higher than a day case. After accounting for country population statistics [7], we reported 67 average annual rate of bed days per 1,000 population in children under 5 years, and in infants 68 <1 year and children aged 1-4 years. We described the distribution of bed days due to RSV-RTI 69 and other-pathogen-RTI by narrow age bands (<3 months, 3-5 months, 6-11 months, and 1-4 years of age) and by the presence of underlying medical conditions that were defined by ICD 70 diagnosis codes (any of prematurity, bronchopulmonary dysplasia, cystic fibrosis, and 71 congenital heart disease) versus the distribution of the number of hospital episodes [7, 8]. For 72 each RSV-RTI hospital episode (and other-pathogen-RTI), we calculated the number of bed days 73 as the length of stay (LOS) in days among children under 5 years in each country. We reported 74 75 the median LOS for RSV-RTI and other-pathogen-RTI, and the distribution of hospital episodes by fine LOS groups (<1 day, 1-day interval between 1 and 7 days, 8-14 days, 15-29 days, and 30+ 76 77 days) for RSV-RTI and other-pathogen-RTI, separately.

78 Results

79 Birth month

In Finland, infants who were born in December and January most frequently had the highest 80 RSV-RTI admission rates in the first year of life compared to other birth months (Figure 1); the 81 lowest rates were most frequently found in those born in June (appendix Table S3). In Denmark 82 and Norway, infants who were born in December most frequently had the highest RSV-RTI 83 admission rates in the first year of life, and the lowest rates were most frequently found in 84 those born in May. In Scotland, infants who were born in November most frequently had the 85 highest RSV-RTI admission rates; the lowest rates were most frequently found among infants 86 born in March. In the Netherlands, the highest RSV-RTI admission rates were observed in 87 infants who were born in October-December, and the lowest rates were in those born in March 88 and April. 89

We found the strongest positive correlation when moving the RSV seasonality series ahead by 2 90 91 months relative to the birth cohort series, with the Pearson's correlation coefficients ranging from 0.64 (95%CI 0.55-0.72) in Denmark to 0.91 (95%CI 0.83-0.95) in the Netherlands. We 92 found the strongest negative correlation when lagging the RSV seasonality series by 3 months 93 relative to the birth month series in the countries except for Norway (4 months for Norway), 94 95 and the Pearson's correlation coefficients ranged from -0.45 (95%CI -0.56 to -0.33) in Finland to -0.66 (95%CI -0.82 to -0.40) in the Netherlands (detailed Pearson's correlation coefficients in 96 97 appendix Figure S1). In line with Figure 1, the correlation coefficients suggested that infants 98 born 2 months before the peak month of RSV admissions were more likely to have the highest

99 RSV-RTI admission rates during the first year of life, and infants born 3-4 months after the peak

100 month tended to have the lowest RSV-RTI admission rates during the first year of life (appendix

101 Figure S1). The median ratio between the highest rates and lowest rates ranged from 3.2 (IQR,

102 2.8-3.6) in Scotland to 10.2 (IQR, 4.4-17.6) in Finland.

103 Bed days for RSV-RTI and other-pathogen-RTI

104 RSV-RTI caused between 4,131 and 34,996 bed days annually in Scotland, England, the

105 Netherlands, Finland, Denmark, and Norway, and 2,817 bed days annually in the Veneto Region

106 of Italy (appendix Table S4). Between 70% (Norway) and 89% (the Netherlands) of these bed

107 days were in infants <1 year. After accounting for country population statistics, RSV-RTI were

108 associated with 9.9 (95% CI 9.8-10.0) to 21.2 (21.1-21.3) bed days per 1,000 children under 5

109 years annually, 40.3 (40.1-40.4) to 91.2 (90.6-91.8) bed days per 1,000 infants aged <1 year

annually, and 1.1 (1.0-1.1) to 7.1 (7.0-7.2) per 1,000 children aged 1-4 years annually (appendix

111 Table S4). Compared to other-pathogen-RTI admission, the annual number of bed days for RSV-

112 RTI admission was 1.5-3.5 times higher in children under 5 years across the countries (appendix

113 Table S5). By narrower age bands, the annual average number of bed days for RSV-RTI was 2.8-

114 7.9 times higher than other-pathogen-RTI in infants <3 months, 2.3-9.3 times higher for 3-5

115 months, 1.1-4.8 times higher for 6-11 months, while lower (0.4-0.9 times) for children aged 1-4

116 years (appendix Table S5).

117 Young infants and underlying medical conditions

118 In countries except for Italy, infants <3 months who were admitted with RSV-RTI had a

disproportionate number of bed days compared to the number of hospital episodes (37-58% of

bed days in children under 5 years versus 33-52% of hospital episodes) (appendix Table S5). In

121

122

| 123 | 26% of the RSV-RTI hospital episodes). The longer hospital stay for young infants and children |
|-----|--|
| 124 | with underlying medical conditions was not RSV-specific, as similar patterns were also observed |
| 125 | for other-pathogen-RTI (detailed results in Table S7-S8, Figure S3). |
| 126 | Length of hospital stay for RSV-RTI by country |
| 127 | The median number of LOS for RSV-RTI ranged from 2 days (IQR 0.5-4 days) in Finland to 4 days |
| 128 | (IQR 2-6 days) in the Netherlands (appendix Table S6). Between 29% and 73% of RSV-RTI |
| 129 | hospital episodes in the 7 countries had a LOS of 0-3 bed days, 22-52% for 4-7 bed days, 4-16% |
| 130 | for 8-14 bed days, and 0.5-7% for ≥15 bed days. The proportion of RSV-RTI hospital episodes |
| 131 | with a LOS of <1 day varied substantially between countries, with the lowest proportion in the |
| 132 | Netherlands and the Veneto Region of Italy (<1%), and the highest proportion in Finland (31%). |
| 133 | Additionally, the Veneto Region of Italy had a lower proportion of RSV-RTI hospital episodes |
| 134 | with a LOS of 1-2 days and a higher proportion of RSV-RTI hospital episodes with a LOS of 4-7 |
| 135 | days compared to the other countries. The Veneto Region of Italy and the Netherlands had a |
| 136 | higher proportion of RSV-RTI hospital episodes with a LOS of 8-14 days than the other |
| 137 | countries. After excluding the hospital admissions with a LOS of <1 day, the proportion of RSV- |
| 138 | RTI hospital episodes with a LOS of 1 day was still lowest in the Veneto Region of Italy, followed |
| 139 | by the Netherlands and the other countries. |
| | |

all the countries, children under 5 years with underlying medical conditions had a

disproportionate number of bed days (5-47% of the bed days in children under 5 years versus 3-

140 Discussion

141 In this study, we report the epidemiology and hospital burden of RSV-RTI in children under 5 142 years in 7 European countries using 6 national healthcare databases and one subnational 143 database. Infants born 2 months (more frequently in November-January) before the peak 144 month of RSV admissions were more likely to have the highest RSV-RTI admission rate during 145 the first year of life. Infants <1 year had substantially higher rates of bed days compared to children aged 1-4 years, and accounted for 70-89% of the bed days in children under 5 years. 146 The annual number of bed days for RSV-RTI was higher than other-pathogen-RTI in infants <1 147 year. Infants <3 months and children with underlying medical conditions had a disproportionate 148 number of bed days for RTI associated with RSV and other pathogens compared to the number 149 150 of hospital episodes.

Infants usually experience one RSV season, or part of two RSV seasons during their first year of 151 life. However, because susceptibility to RSV infection can vary by month of age, infants born in 152 different months relative to the local RSV season can have substantially different risks for RSV-153 RTI admission. The result that infants born 2 months before the peak of RSV admissions are 154 more likely to have the highest rate is in line with our previous finding that the highest rates 155 156 occur in infants who are 1-2 months of age [7]. Interestingly, serological studies [21, 22] found 157 that infants born during winter, spring, and early summer had a similar risk of RSV infection at 158 age <1 year, but those born after the first half of the RSV season had a higher level of 159 maternally derived antibodies. The difference in the level of maternally derived antibodies may 160 also be related to the different RSV-RTI hospital admission rates by birth month. In Europe, nationally generalizable results on the association between birth month and RSV-RTI 161

| 162 | admissions are only found in England [16]. Consistent with our result, the English study found |
|-----|---|
| 163 | that infants born in September-November during 2010-2014 had the highest odds (odds ratio |
| 164 | of 2.1-2.4) of a positive RSV test during their first year of life compared to those born in |
| 165 | January. Similar results were also found in two subnational studies in Spain and the |
| 166 | Netherlands, as well as in a multi-center Spanish study [10, 11, 23]. In contrast, another Dutch |
| 167 | study on patients in general practice found that being born during April-September was |
| 168 | associated with higher odds of RSV lower respiratory tract infections compared to other periods |
| 169 | [13]. The RSV-RTI general practice episodes peaked during November-December, about 1-2 |
| 170 | months earlier than the peak of RSV hospital episodes we observed in the Netherlands. This |
| 171 | may explain the shift of "high-risk" birth months [24, 25]. A Danish study did not find a |
| 172 | significant association between birth timing (in season) and RSV-associated admissions, but this |
| 173 | study was not adequately powered [26]. |
| 174 | The country-specific estimates of bed days show the burden of RSV-RTI in children under 5 |
| 175 | years on secondary care services. The average annual number of bed days due to RSV-RTI per |
| 176 | 1,000 population was 10-65 times higher in infants <1 year than in children aged 1-4 years |
| 177 | across the 7 countries, highlighting the substantial RSV-RTI burden among infants. |
| 178 | Our median estimates of LOS per episode are generally comparable to the average LOS for the |
| 179 | European region (2.7 days; 95% CI: 2.6-2.7) estimated in a systematic review [27]. Differences in |

180 LOS between countries were observed, which may reflect differences in hospital care practices

181 between countries. For example, the Netherlands and the Veneto Region of Italy had a higher

182 median LOS at RSV-RTI admission than the other countries, mainly driven by the very small

183 proportion of hospital episodes with <1 day of LOS in the two areas and the higher proportion

| 184 | of hospital episodes with 8-14 days of LOS. In the Netherlands only clinical admissions were |
|-----|--|
| 185 | included; not day admissions for observation. After removing the hospital episodes with a LOS |
| 186 | of <1 day, the median LOS for RSV-RTI admission in the Netherlands (4 days) and the Veneto |
| 187 | Region of Italy (4 days) was still higher than that of the other countries (3 days). Additionally, |
| 188 | the hospital admission rate of RSV-RTI in these two areas was low [7]; it could be that the |
| 189 | admission policy in these two areas is more strict than that in other countries. Compared to our |
| 190 | incidence estimates [7], LOS seems to be negatively associated with RSV-RTI hospital admission |
| 191 | rates in 5 countries except for Denmark and England. |
| 192 | Limitations of this study are similar to those in our previous study [7]. We used ICD codes to |
| 193 | identify RSV-RTI admissions (and other-pathogen-RTI). We previously verified that the total |
| 194 | counts and age distribution of RSV-coded admissions were comparable to that of RSV- |
| 195 | confirmed admissions based on laboratory records in both Scotland and Finland [7]. |
| 196 | Unfortunately, this verification cannot be extrapolated to other countries. Additionally, we |
| 197 | were unable to assess bias in testing or under-detection due to the unavailability of laboratory- |
| 198 | confirmed RSV-negative records. The lack of coding of causal pathogens for a large proportion |
| 199 | of RTI admissions (between 7% in England and 23% in the Netherlands were pathogen-coded) |
| 200 | [7] might suggest that we have underestimated the true number of bed days for RSV-RTI and |
| 201 | other-pathogen-RTI. The association between birth month and RSV-RTI admission rates might |
| 202 | be affected if differences in coding and viral testing practices exist between the RSV season and |
| 203 | the rest of the year. Given the differences in coding and viral testing practices between |
| 204 | countries, country-specific estimates might have been affected to varying degrees. Coding |
| 205 | practices could have also changed over time. For example, the proportion of RTI hospital |

| 206 | admissions with any pathogen-specific codes decreased in England and Scotland since 2013, |
|-----|---|
| 207 | and this indicates that estimates of bed days for the two nations could have been |
| 208 | underestimated to a larger degree in the most recent years [7]. Our future work is to generate |
| 209 | estimates of RSV hospital burden using the time-series modelling approach, which can reduce |
| 210 | coding related biases. Hospital-acquired infections were not excluded in our analyses; estimates |
| 211 | of bed days and LOS could have been biased due to the mis-attribution of hospital stays before |
| 212 | acquiring the RSV infection, especially in children with underlying medical conditions. Since RSV |
| 213 | burden could be influenced by climate, socioeconomic and other environmental factors [1], the |
| 214 | estimates for Veneto Region of Italy may not be representative of the whole country. |
| 215 | Additionally, the country population statistics used to estimate rates of bed days could also be |
| 216 | biased due to errors in data collection (population registers and censuses) [28].Conclusions |
| 217 | This analysis of multi-year, nationally representative hospital databases in 7 European countries |
| 218 | provides high-quality evidence to support country secondary care services planning and future |
| 219 | decision making related to national RSV intervention strategies. The estimates provide evidence |
| 220 | to support evaluation of RSV intervention programmes. RSV disease prevention therapies |
| 221 | (monoclonal antibodies and maternal vaccines) given to infants could help prevent a substantial |
| 222 | number of bed days due to RSV-RTI. Our results from the birth month analysis should inform |
| 223 | future development of RSV immunisation schedules. |

Footnote page

Study Group Members

The RESCEU investigators are as follows: Rachel M Reeves, You Li, Xin Wang, Harry Campbell, Harish Nair (University of Edinburgh, Scotland); Maarten van Wijhe, Thea Kølsen Fischer, Lone Simonsen (Roskilde University, Denmark), Ramona Trebbien (Statens Serum Institut, Denmark); Caroline Klint Johannesen (Nordsjællands Hospital, Denmark); Sabine Tong (Sanofi); Mathieu Bangert, Clarisse Demont (Sanofi Pasteur); Toni Lehtonen (Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare, Turku University Hospital, Finland); Terho Heikkinen (University of Turku and Turku University Hospital, Finland); Anne C Teirlinck, Michiel van Boven, Wim van der Hoek, Nicoline van der Maas, Adam Meijer (National Institute for Public Health and the Environment (RIVM), the Netherlands); Liliana Vazquez Fernandez, Håkon Bøas, Terese Bekkevold, Elmira Flem (Norwegian Institute of Public Health, Norway); Luca Stona, Irene Speltra, Carlo Giaquinto (Penta, Italy); Eugenio Baraldi, Daniele Donà (Università di Padova, Italy); Arnaud Cheret (Janssen); Amanda Leach, Sonia Stoszek (GlaxoSmithKline); Philippe Beutels (University of Antwerp, Belgium); Louis Bont (University Medical Centre Utrecht, the Netherlands); Andrew Pollard (University of Oxford, UK); Peter Openshaw (Imperial College, UK); Michael Abram (AstraZeneca); Kena Swanson (Pfizer); Brian Rosen (Novavax); Eva Molero (Synapse Research Management Partners).

Supplementary Data

Supplementary materials are available at The Journal of Infectious Diseases online. Consisting of data provided by the authors to benefit the reader, the posted materials are not copyedited

and are the sole responsibility of the authors, so questions or comments should be addressed to the corresponding author.

Financial support

This work was supported by the Innovative Medicines Initiative 2 Joint Undertaking (grant 116019). This Joint Undertaking receives support from the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme and the European Federation of Pharmaceutical Industries and Associations.

Supplement sponsorship

This supplement is sponsored by RESCEU (REspiratory Syncytial Virus Consortium in EUrope).

Potential conflicts of interest

YL reports grants from WHO, grants from Wellcome Trust outside the submitted work. ACT reports grants from EU Innovative Medicines Initiative 2 Joint Undertaking under grant agreement 116019 for Respiratory Syncytial Virus Consortium in Europe (RESCEU) project during the conduct of the study. MB reports an employee of Sanofi Pasteur and may hold shares. TH reports grants from EU Innovative Medicines Initiative 2 Joint Undertaking during the conduct of this study; personal fees from Sanofi Pasteur and Janssen outside the submitted work. ST reports as an employee of Sanofi Pasteur. HC reports grants from EU Innovative Medicines Initiative, grants and personal fees from Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, grants and personal fees from WHO during the conduct of the study. EB reports personal fees from AbbVie, Sanofi, Chiesi outside the submitted work. All other authors report no potential conflicts.

Acknowledgements

Disclaimer: Data from the Norwegian Patient Registry have been used in this publication. The interpretation and reporting of these data are the sole responsibility of the authors, and no endorsement by the Norwegian Patient Registry is intended nor should be inferred. According to Danish law, ethics approval is exempt for this kind of register based research. Due to the nature of this research, there was no involvement of patients or members of the public in the design or reporting of this study. Direct dissemination to study participants is not possible. The publication only contains aggregated results and no personal data. The publication is, therefore, not covered by the European General Data Protection Regulation. The results in this manuscript only reflect the authors' view, and the European Commission is not responsible for any use that may be made of the information it contains.

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Figure 1. RSV-RTI admission rates per 1,000 infants <1 year by birth month and calendar month in Finland, Denmark, Norway, Scotland and the Netherlands.

Blue points are hospital admission rates of RSV-RTI per 1,000 live births by birth month; red points are annualised rates of RSV-RTI per 1,000 infants by calendar month. Dotted vertical lines denote

January of each observation year.