

Peer Review

Review of: "The Global Polio Eradication Initiative has done well to introduce 3 doses of the Inactivated Poliovirus Vaccine in Afghanistan"

Vipin M. Vashishtha¹

1. Department of pediatrics, Mangla Hospital and Research Center, Bijnor, India

The manuscript strongly advocates replacing OPV with IPV, but the new evidence is limited; the Afghanistan campaign serves more as a narrative anchor than as substantive proof.

- OPV is described as having “very low VE” and being an “inferior tool,” which is an overstatement and ignores its central role in achieving >99% reduction in global polio and its unique ability to interrupt transmission.
- A key biological issue—intestinal mucosal immunity—is insufficiently addressed. OPV provides strong gut immunity critical for transmission control in fecal–oral settings, whereas IPV largely provides systemic protection.
- The claim of low OPV efficacy in LMICs is oversimplified; it does not distinguish between serotype-specific performance, multiple-dose effects, and cumulative protection.
- The manuscript underplays the continued risk of WPV1 transmission in Afghanistan and Pakistan, where OPV remains essential for interrupting spread.
- IPV is presented as a definitive standalone solution, but its limited effect on intestinal infection and transmission (owing to suboptimal intestinal mucosal immunity) is not adequately acknowledged; conclusions are more certain than current evidence supports.
- Interpretation of the Afghanistan IPV campaign is premature; acceptability and feasibility are reported, but no data on immunogenicity or impact on transmission are provided.

- The dismissal of nOPV as “unsafe” is too categorical and not aligned with current evidence showing improved genetic stability compared to Sabin OPV.

There is nothing new in recommending the hexavalent vaccine instead of penta, which is being considered at different NITAG levels. The programmatic feasibility of switching to hexavalent/IPV-based strategies (cost, supply, delivery constraints) is not sufficiently discussed.

- The tone is often normative (“fatal flaw,” “not science-supported”) and reads more as advocacy than balanced scientific analysis.

Overall, the manuscript raises an important debate but is one-sided, insufficiently nuanced, and not adequately supported by new data; substantial revision is needed.

Declarations

Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.