

M8 Alliance

Academic Health Centers, Universities and National Academies

M8 Alliance Statement 2014

World Health Summit, Berlin October 19 to 22, 2014

“Health is more than Medicine”

A. Health is a human right.

Health has an enormous impact on social and economic development worldwide. Nothing is more important than health for the individual and for the whole of society. Today this fundamental public good is facing enormous threats. A concerted global strategy of all stakeholders from academia, industry, politics and civil society is required to tackle current and future challenges to health on a global scale. In order to succeed, this strategy has to be developed and executed by a broad alliance across disciplines and national boundaries, going beyond presently involved organizations. In view of today’s great and urgent challenges, there is no time to lose. Joint action is not a choice but mandatory.

B. The World Health Summit is the forum to further international co-operation for health and to devise solutions for the most pressing issues in global health. It brings together decision makers and opinion leaders from countries across the world and from diverse backgrounds including politics, academia, industry, clinical healthcare and civil society. With its international and interdisciplinary outlook, the World Health Summit is a central platform for high-profile dialogue and strategy development in health since its inauguration in 2009. (www.worldhealthsummit.org)

C. The M8 Alliance of Academic Health Centers, Universities and National Academies provides the academic foundation of the World Health Summit. The M8 Alliance features 17 members from 13 different countries. The InterAcademyPanel (IAP) provides an umbrella for international science worldwide. We are committed to improving global health, working with political, social and economic decision makers to develop science-based solutions to health challenges worldwide. The M8 Alliance collaborates closely with all international organizations involved in global health, especially with the organizations of the United Nations and the World Health Organization. For international health issues, the WHO has to be the leading institution. (www.worldhealthsummit.org/m8-alliance.html, <http://www.iamp-online.org>)

D. Calls for action in the following six major global health issues were developed by the M8 Alliance concluding discussions at the World Health Summit 2014:

- 1 – Ebola
- 2 – Climate Change and Health
- 3 – Translational Medicine
- 4 – Medical Education
- 5 – Prevention, Healthy Cities and Demographic Change
- 6 – Hearing Loss

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1. The Global Health Issue: Ebola

How can we stop the current Ebola epidemic and prevent it from becoming a pandemic in a globalized world?

The Ebola outbreak has been a wakeup call for global health: to date there have been more than 4,000 deaths, and a projected number of 20,000 people will have been infected by early November. Response to this global threat has been too slow and ill-coordinated at both the national and international level. This demonstrates governance failure and lack of preparedness to conduct a swift, effective and joint coordinated response to such a global health emergency that requires all actors to work hand in hand.

The M8 Alliance Call for Action on Ebola:

- The global community needs to act now to prevent further spread and to ameliorate the drastic social and economic effects on the countries affected. For this, it is imperative for the different stakeholders to co-operate and to establish a joint task force. This is now underway and the efforts of individual helpers and organizations have to be recognized. However, financial, medical, technical and logistic support needs to be stepped up and major issues such as security, foreign policy and economic development need to be addressed.
- “The Berlin Declaration on Ebola” (Annex 1) was presented at the World Health Summit and highlights the international commitment to tackle the current Ebola outbreak.

2. The Global Health Issue: Climate Change

How will we deal with the effect of a changing climate on health?

Climate change will have a dramatic detrimental effect on health in the years to come. Sea levels are rising, glaciers are melting, and precipitation patterns are changing. Extreme weather events, such as excessive heat, drought, flooding or cyclones are becoming more frequent and intense and directly cause death, illness, injury and destruction of livelihood. In addition to this direct effect, human health will also be affected indirectly by climate-related alterations in agriculture, lack of clean drinking water and lack of food. Global warming changes the spatial distribution and frequency of many infectious diseases. The WHO estimates that by 2030, approximately 250.000 additional deaths per year will occur due to climate change. On the financial scale, the WHO predicts annual health expenses of US\$ 2-4 billion as a direct consequence of global warming. With this in mind, it is secondary whether climate warming is fully or partially man-made: it is consensus that humanity can mitigate climate warming by appropriate and coordinated action.

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The M8 Alliance Call for Action on Climate Change:

- The impact of global warming on health always needs to be an integral part of climate change negotiations.
- Measures which have a long-term positive effect on health and the economy, and at the same time curtail global warming need to be implemented with vigor.
- Global action needs to be taken now to fully understand the effect of global warming on health.
- Strategies to combat and mitigate the catastrophic impact climate warming will have on human health worldwide need to be developed.
- For further information see Annex 2.

3. The Global Health Issue: Translational Medicine

How can we make sure that new discoveries in research quickly benefit society?

Basic Biomedical research constantly improves our understanding of health and disease. However, the translation of research innovations into practicable options in clinical care is all but easy. Problems with regulatory conditions, reimbursement and education of the end user are further impediments to translational efficiency. Costly and lengthy trials are needed at a stage when ultimate success is unpredictable, and crucial findings and breakthroughs are often not sufficiently communicated. Important themes such as rare diseases or antibiotic resistance of microbes are often neglected. These problems and structural barriers can prove unsurmountable for the individual researcher and can prevent truly innovative new concepts from ever becoming treatment options, let alone from being routinely used in clinical practice.

The M8 Alliance Call for Action on Translational Medicine:

- The translation of research results into better health for the population needs higher priority. New strategies must pave the road from discovery to patient benefit.
- Multidisciplinary Research Platforms with open access for both academic and industry researchers with the support of politics and civil society should be an area for concentrated and extensive investment. They improve research infrastructure, facilitate synergy and exchange between different academic working groups and further collaboration between academic and commercial researchers. This enables the different actors to join forces to translate new basic science discoveries into innovative clinical treatment options and thus achieve truly powerful multidisciplinary outcomes.

4. The Global Health Issue: Medical Education

How can we prepare future physicians for healthcare in a globalized world?

Training future physicians is a very challenging and resource-intensive process across the world. Despite having evolved in very diverse legislative and cultural frameworks, Medical Education has a common global aim: empower future physicians to improve the health of individual patients and their societies, recognizing the relationships between the two. Traditionally, medical school curricula have focused primarily on diagnosis and treatment of disease, rather than on the needs of patients and societies. Physicians in today's interlinked and globalized world increasingly need an in-depth understanding of the complex interdependencies affecting health.

The M8 Alliance Call for Action on Medical Education:

- A worldwide harmonized Global Health Curriculum for medical students should be developed to provide tomorrow's physicians with the core skills and knowledge to take on a global interdisciplinary perspective on health and thus enable them to effectively meet the challenges posed to health by globalization on the individual, social and global scale.
- In medical education emphasis must be placed on the social and medical determinants of health, public health and the prevention of diseases.
- High quality education of other health professionals needs to be ensured and sustained.
- Ongoing educational engagement with the general public regarding health literacy is an essential activity. It warrants immediate attention to empower the whole of society to interact with health systems to take responsibility for health.

5. The Global Health Issue: Prevention, Healthy Cities and Demographic Change

How can we today lay the foundation for healthy aging in the future?

Demographic change and healthy aging are major concerns not limited to industrialized countries. Both will affect societies in many ways. People strive to stay active, healthy and productive far beyond the classical retirement age. Whilst the mid-aged and older generations focus more and more on healthy living and physical activity, especially the latter tends to be neglected by the younger generations. Olympic Games and other major sports events have the potential to attract especially young people and encourage physical exercise. They have the power to stimulate the building up of civil society and infrastructure to promote health.

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The M8 Alliance Call for Action on Prevention, Healthy Cities and Demographic Change:

- It is essential to promote a mind-set that encourages individuals as well as society as a whole to embrace a healthy lifestyle.
- Further research is needed to assess the amount of physical activity most beneficial for the individual to prevent disease or injury in the future.
- Future Olympic Games and other major sports events should be organized in close co-operation with academia, clinical healthcare, civil society, industry and other stakeholders in health. This way, it can be ensured that their potential in promoting a healthy lifestyle is realized.

6. The Global Health Issue: Hearing Loss

How can we ensure effective prevention and treatment of hearing loss?

The World Health Organization estimates that more than 360 million people suffer from disabling hearing loss. This presents an enormous social and economic burden, not only for the affected persons but also for their families and communities, particularly in low and middle income countries. As noted by the WHO, approximately half the global burden of hearing loss can be prevented and the most serious negative consequences of the remainder can be effectively treated with proven and relatively inexpensive methods.

The M8 Alliance Call for Action on Hearing Loss:

- The global community must act now to implement and strengthen health care systems and activities for the prevention, detection and treatment of hearing loss. Training of professionals who are specialized in the health care management of hearing loss must be expanded.
- Closer international co-operation is needed among existing governmental and non-governmental agencies to implement effective and evidence-based strategies.



Berlin Declaration on Ebola

World Health Summit 2014, Berlin October 19 to 22, 2014

We, the organizers of the World Health Summit (WHS), the “M8 Alliance of Academic Health Centers, Universities and National Academies”, the partners and the participants of the WHS from governments, industries, civil society, governmental and non-governmental organizations, express our deepest concern about the unprecedented spread of Ebola in parts of West Africa. We are deeply saddened by the loss of thousands of lives and the suffering the disease is inflicting. We note with regret that there appears to be no standard cure against the Ebola virus to date. The United Nations Security Council has determined that the unprecedented extent of the Ebola outbreak in Africa constitutes a threat to international peace and security. It is our common understanding that the current Ebola epidemic has the potential to turn into one of the most serious public health threats in the 21st century.

As members of the international health community we recognize our collective responsibility to mobilize our efforts to deliver assistance to the affected communities. We shall undertake joint efforts to contain the disease and to prevent it from spreading to other regions including to those outside West Africa. The Ebola epidemic shall not develop into a pandemic.

The participants of the World Health Summit are convinced that in the wake of the current Ebola outbreak, the international community needs a new approach to combat similar threats to health in the future, bearing in mind the increasing mobility of today’s world. In the future we must ensure that diseases as infectious and deadly as Ebola will remain on the agenda of the international health community. They deserve our permanent attention and a resolute and coordinated response.

We commend all the local and international health workers and volunteers for their courageous efforts. We will match this selfless commitment by providing relief through financial and material support and through expertise. For our contribution to be effective, we always have to make sure that we take into account the individual requirements of the countries affected. In the short term, our aim should be to meet the most urgent needs. Ultimately, however, we must make ourselves part of a long-term effort to assist the affected region in rebuilding its health infrastructure.

Additional information:

The M8 Alliance of Academic Health Centers, Universities and National Academies is a collaborative network of academic institutions of educational and research excellence. It features 17 members from 13 different countries and provides the academic foundation of the World Health Summit since 2009. With its strong commitment to improving global health, the M8 Alliance cooperates with political and economic decision makers to develop science-based solutions to health challenges worldwide. (www.worldhealthsummit.org; www.worldhealthsummit.org/m8-alliance.html)



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The World Health Summit Declaration on Climate Change and Health

Act Now: Climate Change Negotiations in Paris 2015

The World Health Summit calls on all heads of state, stakeholders in health, the general public and most explicitly on the parties involved in the Conference of the Parties (COP 21) of the UN Conference on Climate Change 2015 in Paris to explicitly understand: There is no way that the healthcare sector can effectively protect humanity from a world four degrees warmer - which given the lack of effective reduction of greenhouse emissions seems an alarmingly likely scenario. Even if global temperature increase can be limited to two degrees, medical professionals will not be able to protect the health of the population from the full extent of damage, and the cost of adaptation will be substantial.

We strongly advocate that a consideration of this health impact always needs to be an integral part of climate change negotiations. The purpose of these negotiations is to prevent dangerous climate change. Health is severely threatened by climate change and of paramount importance. We therefore urge the Conference of the Parties 2015 to not neglect health and to actively involve health experts and other stakeholders in all stages of the negotiations.

According to the World Health Organization, climate change will cause at least an extra 250,000 deaths per year from 2030, with the prospect of a much greater impact later in the century. With this effect growing over time, it will be our children and grandchildren who will experience the full impact of climate change. With the health of future generations usually considered a goal of highest importance, we call on decision-makers to put health protection at the top of the policy agenda regarding climate change.

We also emphasize that shifting towards a more sustainable way of life has substantial co-benefits beyond curtailing climate change. For example, reducing coal combustion would prevent air pollution related deaths. Health and sustainability go hand in hand and substantial direct health benefits would arise if effective climate policies in sectors including transport, agriculture, food and urban planning were implemented. It is a matter of great urgency to achieve this transformation.

The COP 21 Meeting 2015 in Paris is our very last chance to contain climate change. Global emissions must not peak later than at the end of this decade. This is the only way to confine global warming to below 2° C – the internationally accepted guard rail. To achieve this, we most strongly call on all decision-makers involved to work towards a legally binding agreement at the COP 21 Meeting. We simply cannot miss this potentially final chance to prevent a catastrophic outcome in public and individual health in the future.