

CENTRAL TOPICS 2020

Pandemic Preparedness in the Age of COVID-19: Global Cooperation not Competition

The COVID-19 pandemic has once again shown that we need everyone to get involved in a massive effort to keep the world safe. Researchers are working at high speed to understand new viruses, develop treatments and vaccines to curb pandemics and prevent future outbreaks. With COVID-19 new forms of collaboration have emerged for scientists around the world to share results much faster than during any previous outbreaks. With leadership by the World Health Organization (WHO), science has to take a collective and non-discriminative responsibility to support such a global governance.

Strengthening the Role of the European Union in Global Health

In recent years, Germany has strengthened its commitment to global health, leveraging its G7 and G20 presidencies and lending support to multilateral and bilateral health partnerships. It has also become one of the strongest supporters of the World Health Organization and other international agencies. Germany has announced that global health will be a priority during its 2020 EU presidency, in cooperation with its triopartners Portugal and Slovenia. This presents a significant opportunity to help identify interventions in areas like development, health, research, environment, and trade that all EU members can implement to achieve SDG 3.

Climate Change and Health: Risks and Responses

Unprecedented changes are occurring in natural systems that threaten to undermine progress in human health. Sustained population health requires the life-supporting “services” of natural systems. Populations of all animal species depend on supplies of food and water, low exposure to major infectious diseases, and a stable climate. Urgent action is needed to reduce the greenhouse gas emissions leading to rapid climate change and to address other environmental trends that pose increasing health risks.

Partnership for the Goals: United Nations’ 75th Anniversary

Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, our shared vision for the future, will require cooperation across borders, sectors, and generations. But just when we need collective action more than ever, support for global cooperation is flagging. In many countries, public trust in traditional institutions is in decline and relations between countries are under strain. Dialogue and action on global issues—nearly all of which directly and indirectly affect health—could not be more urgent. Through these conversations, the UN aims to build a global vision of 2045 (its centenary), increase understanding of the threats to that future, and support enhanced international cooperation to realize that vision.

Accelerating the SDG 3 Global Action Plan for Health and Well-Being

The Global Action Plan for Healthy Lives and Well-Being for All brings together 12 multilateral health, development, and humanitarian agencies to better support countries and accelerate progress towards health-related Sustainable Development Goals. Under the Global Action Plan, the agencies are better aligning their work to reduce inefficiencies and provide more streamlined support to countries and forums for international commitments to health, such as the UN High-Level Meeting on Universal Health Coverage and the Astana Conference on Primary Health Care. At the World Health Summit, representatives of the signatory agencies will present updates on the Action Plan, and its challenges and successes.

Translational Research: Advancing Innovative Treatments

Translational research is part of a bidirectional process in which research findings are moved from the researcher's bench to the patient's bedside, but also back from clinical findings into mechanistic research. Development of new diagnostic and informatics methods has seen a trend towards more personalized therapeutic approaches. Information on individuals' genomic/transcriptomic profiles, in combination with lifestyle and environmental factors, are integrated to guide medical decisions in terms of prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of disease.

Digital Health & AI for Pandemic Preparedness

Following the first meeting of world leaders on universal health coverage (UHC) and launch of the Global Action Plan for Healthy Lives and Well-Being for All at the UN General Assembly in 2019, as well as the WHO Director-General 2020 "Global Strategy on Digital Health," the stakes for advancing a truly global market in digital health have taken on a new dimension. The next step is ensuring a transformative and multi-stakeholder ecosystem for the sustainability of innovations and growth of digital public goods, their economic viability, scale-up, and inclusivity.