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WHO Public Health Report

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GLOBAL PARTNERS COMMIT TO ADVANCE EVIDENCE-BASED TRADITIONAL, COMPLEMENTARY AND INTEGRATIVE MEDICINE

The first-ever [World Health Organization \(WHO\) Traditional Medicine Global Summit 2023](#) closed on 18 August 2023, with a strong commitment from the diverse and unique groups of partners and stakeholders to harness the potential of evidence-based traditional, complementary and integrative medicine (TCIM) to improve progress towards universal health coverage and Sustainable Development Goals by 2030 for the health and well-being of people and the planet.

Health ministers from G20 and other countries, scientists, practitioners of traditional medicine, health workers and members of civil society from 88 countries participated in the Summit that took place in Gandhinagar, Gujarat, India on 17 and 18 August 2023.

The Summit provided a platform for all stakeholders to share their unique experiences, best practices and ideas for collaboration. It included a diverse group of indigenous peoples from different regions of the world (including Australia, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Guatemala and New Zealand, among others) for whom many TCIM approaches play a fundamental role in not just health care, but also culture and livelihoods.

In closing the Summit, Dr Hans Kluge, WHO Regional Director for Europe said, *“Together, we have gently shaken up the status quo that has, for far too long, separated different approaches to medicine and health. By taking aim at silos, we are saying we will collaborate all the more to find optimal ways to bring traditional, complementary and integrative medicine well under the umbrella of primary health care and universal health coverage.”*

He further added, *“We have reiterated how crucial it is to get better evidence on the effectiveness, safety and quality of traditional and complementary medicine. That means innovative methodologies for assessing and evaluating outcomes.”* The Summit’s summary document included conclusions and commitments from participants on wide-ranging issues, from global policy, leadership, innovation, health workforce, data, evidence, monitoring, regulation, legal frameworks and protecting biodiversity and sustainable development.

[World Health Organization \(WHO\) Traditional Medicine Global Summit 2023.](#)

More on this: <https://www.who.int/news/item/19-08-2023-global-partners-commit-to-advance-evidence-based-traditional-complementary-and-integrative-medicine>.

STATEMENT – SHAKING UP THE STATUS-QUO THAT SEPARATES DIFFERENT APPROACHES TO MEDICINE AND HEALTH

Statement by Dr Hans Henri P. Kluge, WHO Regional Director for Europe, at the conclusion of the WHO Traditional Medicine Global Summit in Gandhinagar, India, 18 August 2023

Our gracious hosts, the AYUSH and health ministers of India and the Government of Gujarat State;

WHO colleagues from headquarters and our regions;

Delegates from all corners of the world.

Quoting Mahatma Gandhi – the father of modern India – a man whose words continue to inspire: “Namra tareeke se aap duniya ko hila sakte hai” – “In a gentle way, you can shake the world”.

After just two days here in Gandhinagar – the city named after the Mahatma – I think it is no exaggeration to say that all of us, together, have gently shaken up the status-quo that has, for far too long, separated different approaches to medicine and health.

By taking aim at silos, we are saying we will collaborate all the more to find optimal ways to bring traditional, complementary and integrative [TCI] medicine well under the umbrella of primary health care and universal health coverage.

Collaborations underpinned by science and evidence and safety; collaborations that acknowledge the very real role TCI medicine plays in the lives, health and well-being of people globally. Health and well-being achieved through the principles of equity, affordability and quality.

In these two days, we have explored innovative models that combine modern medicines with various forms of traditional, complementary and integrative medicine. Models that stand up to the rigours of scientific study and research.

We have called for policies that promote standardized traditional medicine documentation and accelerate use of the International Classification of Diseases or ICD-11 – thus enabling seamless integration and evidence data generation within routine health information systems.

We have reiterated how crucial it is to get better evidence on the effectiveness, safety and quality of traditional and complementary medicine – that means innovative methodologies for assessing and evaluating outcomes.

[...]

Read the full statement here: <https://www.who.int/europe/news/item/21-08-2023-statement---shaking-up-the-status-quo-that-separates-different-approaches-to-medicine-and-health>.

PROGRESS IN THE WHO EUROPEAN REGION TOWARDS THE SDGs IN THE CONTEXT OF THE OSTRAVA DECLARATION ON ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTH



There is growing evidence that outcomes in human health and environmental health are inextricably linked. The Member States of the WHO European Region formally recognized the importance of the environment–health nexus more than 30 years ago at the first Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health, held in December 1989 in Frankfurt, Germany. More recently, they have renewed their commitment in this area at the Sixth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health held in June 2017 in Ostrava, Czechia. Among other things, Member States committed to developing national portfolios for action that will accelerate progress on health and the environment and contribute to achieving the SDGs. Member States also agreed to using SDG indicators relevant to seven environment and health priorities to monitor progress towards the commitments taken in Ostrava, which is the focus of this report.

The evidence of a link between human health and the environment is mounting. According to WHO, nearly a quarter (23%) of global deaths result from modifiable environmental factors such as air, water and soil pollution; climate change; ecosystem disruptions; and lack of access to safe water. The health sector also has a significant impact on the environment. Researchers focusing on seven environmental stressors (including greenhouse gas emissions, particulate matter and scarce water use) have estimated that the health sector accounts for 1-5% of total environmental impacts.

This report uses official statistics to assess progress made in implementing the Ostrava Declaration on Health and the Environment in the WHO European Region. The quantitative analyses show that progress is mixed and, in most cases, insufficient, but there are important differences in performance depending on the thematic area and subregion within the Region. Certain dimensions of the Declaration show progress in all Member States; however, in some thematic areas the trends are moving in the wrong direction, and particular attention is needed to reverse the situation. Furthermore, some key dimensions of the Ostrava Declaration cannot be accurately monitored in the WHO European Region due to a lack of timely, internationally comparable data. Looking forward, accelerated actions are needed to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030; it will also be important to strengthen data timeliness and availability to improve the monitoring of the priority areas listed in the Ostrava Declaration and in future declarations.

The WHO European Centre for Environment and Health, under the auspices of the European Environment and Health Process, is holding the sixth-level Bonn Dialogue on Environment and Health. For more information, please see [WHO EVENTS](#) section.

For the full report: <https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/368166>.

Read more about the event: [https://www.who.int/europe/initiatives/european-environment-and-health-process-\(ehp\)](https://www.who.int/europe/initiatives/european-environment-and-health-process-(ehp)).

WHO LAUNCHES A NEW GLOBAL INITIATIVE ON DIGITAL HEALTH SUPPORTED BY THE G20 PRESIDENCY

The World Health Organization (WHO) and the G20 India presidency announced a new [Global Initiative on Digital Health](#) (GIDH) today at the Health Minister's Meeting of the G20 Summit hosted by the Government of India.

The new GIDH initiative (pronounced “guide” for short) will operate as a WHO-managed network and platform to support the implementation of the Global Strategy on Digital Health 2020–2025. WHO serves as the Secretariat for the strategy implementation to converge and convene global standards, best practices and resources to fast-track digital health system transformation.

“We thank the G20 countries and the India G20 Presidency for recognizing WHO’s unique role and strengths in this area and supporting the establishment of the new GIDH network,” said Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO Director-General. *“Continued support and collaboration of the G20, development partners and international organizations will be necessary to accomplish together what none of us can do alone. WHO is committed to working with countries to strengthen their capacities and to improve access to quality-assured digital solutions for a healthier, safer, fairer future.”*

Since the first WHO resolution on ehealth in 2005 that led the pathway for development and adoption of the WHO Global Strategy on Digital Health, over 120 WHO Member States have developed a national digital health policy or strategy.

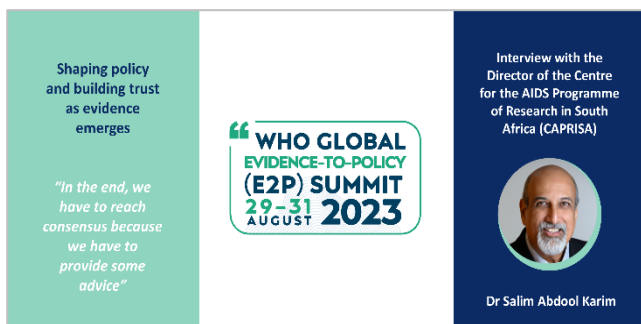
The GIDH initiative aims to bring countries and partners together to achieve measurable outcomes by:

- developing clear priority-driven investment plans for digital health transformation;
- improving reporting and transparency of digital health resources;
- facilitating knowledge exchange and collaboration across regions and countries to accelerate progress;
- supporting whole-of-government approaches for digital health governance in countries; and
- increasing technical and financial support to the implementation of the Global Strategy on Digital Health 2020–2025 and its next phase.

[Global Initiative on Digital Health.](#)

More on this: <https://www.who.int/news/item/19-08-2023-who-launches-a-new-global-initiative-on-digital-health-at-the-g20-summit-in-india>.

Q&A WITH EVIDENCE-TO-POLICY (E2P) SUMMIT KEYNOTE SPEAKER



In this Q&A, E2P Summit keynote speaker Dr Salim Abdool Karim shares his experiences with challenges and opportunities for shaping policy and building trust in science as evidence evolves.

Salim S. Abdool Karim is Director of the Centre for the AIDS Programme of Research in South Africa (CAPRISA), Durban, and CAPRISA Professor of Global Health at Columbia

University, New York. He is an Adjunct Professor of Immunology and Infectious Diseases at Harvard University, Boston, Adjunct Professor of Medicine at Cornell University, New York, and Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research) at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban. Throughout his career, Dr Karim has put the spotlight on the importance of science as a contributor to global health and policy, fighting misinformation and science denialism by promoting access to and use of accurate information, advising governments and decision-makers on appropriate responses and educating the public.

Interviewer: In your opinion, why is evidence-informed policy-making crucial, in particular, in the context of public health and infectious diseases? Can you share an example of a policy decision for which evidence played a key role in shaping the outcome and the positive impact on public health?

Dr Karim: *When a policy is based on or informed by evidence, the rationale becomes readily apparent and is easy to justify. When this is not the case, policy-makers are at sea trying to explain why this course of action was chosen. Sometimes a policy does not need to be evidence-informed to be a good policy. But even a good policy can bite the dust because the people who have to follow the policy do not understand its logic. It does not make sense to them and they cannot relate to it as a result. Hence, even though the policy exists, nobody follows it. Being evidence-informed enhances the ability to translate that policy into action.*

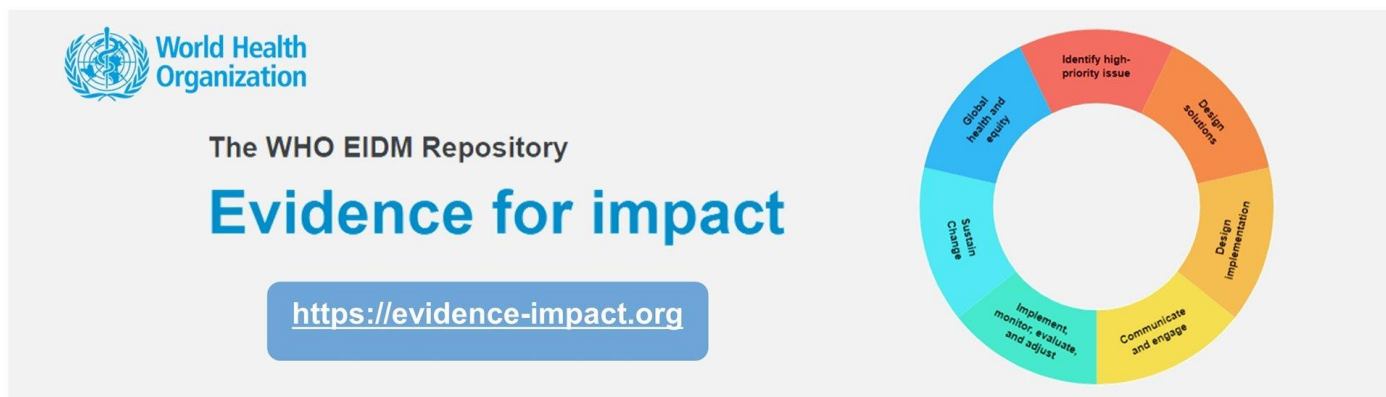
Interviewer: In the face of uncertainty and rapidly evolving circumstances, such as during COVID-19, how do you address the challenges of balancing evidence-informed decision-making with the need for swift action?

Dr Karim: *We saw this particularly in the COVID-19 pandemic early on where there was a need to make decisions and there was no evidence base available on COVID. We therefore drew on what we knew about influenza and respiratory viruses. At that early stage, in the absence of COVID-specific data, we explained that, based on our limited knowledge, this was the best course of action that we could take. Once people were told the limitations of the evidence, they were more willing to go along with the policy.*

Join the WHO Global Evidence-to-Policy Summit from 29-31 August 2023 for more insights from Dr Karim and other speakers and panellists on how to bridge the gap between evidence and policy. [Register now!](#)

Full interview at: <https://www.who.int/news/item/19-08-2023-interview-with-e2p-summit-keynote-speaker-dr-salim-abdool-karim>.

LAUNCH OF THE WHO ONLINE REPOSITORY OF EVIDENCE-INFORMED DECISION-MAKING (EIDM) TOOLS



The WHO online repository of evidence-informed decision-making (EIDM) tools is the first of its kind to highlight WHO tools and external tools utilized by WHO to facilitate knowledge translation and partner organizations involved in planning, managing, monitoring, and evaluating the process of evidence use and implementation.

The Evidence to Policy and Impact Unit of the Research for Health Department in the Science Division, in collaboration with the Evidence-Informed Policy Network (EVIPNet), has developed the repository of tools to support its EIDM capacity-sharing work. The repository complements the WHO evidence ecosystem framework published last year in Evidence, policy, impact. WHO guide for evidence-informed decision-making, specifically focusing on the policy/action cycle. The policy/action cycle outlines the evidence application process within the EIDM workstream, beginning with identifying high-priority issues, and designing, disseminating, and implementing solutions to address these priorities. It also involves evaluating, adjusting, and sustaining any achieved changes to ultimately enhance global health and equity.

EIDM and the work of EVIPNet aim to support WHO staff and Member States in applying rigorous, systematic, and transparent methods for the creation and application of research evidence in their day-to-day work. In doing so, we will be better equipped as an Organization to succeed in the commitment outlined in the General Programme of Work (GPW) 13 to turn the knowledge that WHO produces into action to deliver the “Triple Billion” targets: a billion more people with universal health coverage (UHC), a billion more people protected from health emergencies, and a billion more people with better health and well-being.

[WHO online repository of evidence-informed decision-making \(EIDM\) tools.](#)

[Evidence-Informed Policy Network \(EVIPNet\).](#)

[Evidence, policy, impact. WHO guide for evidence-informed decision-making.](#)

More information is available at: [https://www.who.int/news/item/24-08-2023-launch-of-the-who-online-repository-of-evidence-informed-decision-making-\(eidm\)-tools](https://www.who.int/news/item/24-08-2023-launch-of-the-who-online-repository-of-evidence-informed-decision-making-(eidm)-tools).

“THIS IS A SERIOUS EMERGENCY AND IT’S NOT ONE WE CAN IGNORE”: WORKING IN AN EMERGENCY WARD DURING THE SICILIAN HEATWAVE AND WILDFIRES



On 25 July 2023, staff at Cervello Hospital in Palermo, the capital of the Italian island of Sicily, watched anxiously as wildfires that had ravaged a nearby hilltop inched closer to them and their patients.

“The firefighters were all as busy as we were,” says Dr Ilaria Dilena, Emergency Director at Cervello Hospital. *“The whole area around Palermo was in the throes of fire.”*

While wildfires were being extinguished just metres from the clinic and pharmacy, staff at the hospital worked on. They were battling to manage the impact of 10 days of record-breaking heat. With more people suffering from serious hyperthermia (excessive heat) and dehydration, the hospital had to run two fully staffed shifts instead of one. The condition of these patients could rapidly deteriorate, and many needed urgent medical attention to replace lost fluids and

prevent serious outcomes. Despite health workers’ heroic efforts, during the heatwave the mortality rate in the emergency room rose by a third.

As temperatures outside reached a peak of 47 °C, entire departments were without electricity because of heat damage to cables. Bed space was limited, but discharging some of the older patients became impossible.

Ilaria and her colleague Dr Tiziana Maniscalchi, Health Director at Cervello Hospital, are both shaken by the experience of working through this period of scorching heat and wildfires.

Heat–health action

Climate change is leading to an increase in extreme weather events, including heatwaves. Recent heatwaves in the WHO European Region have led to a rise in related mortality, but the adverse health effects of hot weather and heatwaves are largely preventable. Prevention requires actions at different levels, including meteorological early-warning systems, timely public health and medical advice, improvements to housing and urban planning, and efforts to ensure that health and social systems are ready to act.

Effective prevention can be integrated and systemized in a defined heat–health action plan (HHAP). WHO/Europe, with support from the European Commission, is currently updating its guidance on HHAPs. The guidance aims to direct the efforts of decision-makers and practitioners from health and other sectors to develop national, subnational and/or local HHAPs that frame and guide preventive and remedial interventions for avoiding or reducing heat exposure. This includes a focus on risk communication and the protection of vulnerable population groups.

Read the full story here: <https://www.who.int/europe/news/item/14-08-2023-working-in-an-emergency-ward-during-the-sicilian-heatwave-and-wildfires>.

NEW “HOW TO” GUIDE FOR APPLYING BEHAVIOURAL AND CULTURAL INSIGHTS



WHO/Europe has launched a new guide, providing support to countries on how to apply behavioural and cultural insights (BCI) for health. It presents a simple step-wise approach, complemented by a rich collection of detailed considerations, tools and exercises. The guide is the first of its kind, specifically developed for use by public health professionals developing policies, services and communications informed by BCI across health topics.

Some of the most persistent public health challenges involve human behaviour. Using a BCI lens means that health policies, services and communications can be tailored to the needs and circumstances of people and communities, and thereby help combat these challenges. The new Tailoring Health Programmes (THP) guide describes how this can be done.

Building on several topic-specific guides that focus on applying BCI to routine and influenza vaccination and tackling antimicrobial resistance, as well as external evaluations and a rigorous peer-review process, this guide is the result of over a decade of work by WHO/Europe. The THP approach has already been adopted in over 20 countries and has received positive feedback from public health agencies.

“This guide is the culmination of a decade of work involving many colleagues at country, regional and global levels. The guide is our “BCI bible”, guiding our work with and in countries to help tackle persistent health challenges,” said Katrine Bach Habersaat, Regional Advisor for BCI at WHO/Europe.

Karina Godoy, Senior Analyst and National Focal Point for Behavioural Insights at the Public Health Agency of Sweden, who is employing the approach described in the guide across several health projects, comments: *“The THP guide is easy to use and at the same time provides detailed guidance and inspiration where needed. We have decided to translate the document into Swedish and use the approach widely”*.

BCI is a flagship area for WHO/Europe, which aims to help improve our understanding of the contextual and individual factors that affect health behaviours. On 12-14 September 2023, WHO/Europe will convene its first-ever regional meeting on BCI for health. The meeting will serve to advance the implementation of WHO/Europe Regional Committee’s pioneering resolution on BCI, unanimously adopted by all 53 Member States in September 2022. It will also provide an opportunity for BCI stakeholders in ministries of health and public health institutes across the European Region to exchange case examples, discuss barriers and drivers for a range of health challenges, and explore progress in integrating BCI for health into health systems.

[A guide to tailoring health programmes: using behavioural and cultural insights to tailor health policies, services and communications to the needs and circumstances of people and communities](#)

More on this topic: <https://www.who.int/europe/news/item/18-08-2023-new--how-to--guide-for-applying-behavioural-and-cultural-insights>

THE EUROPEAN PUBLIC HEALTH WEEK: A SUCCESS STORY OF JOINING FORCES FOR A COMMON CAUSE

Behaviours lie at the heart of critical health challenges—and hold the key to solving them

Authors: Hans Henri P Kluge, Robb Butler, Katrine Habersaat

Health systems today face unprecedented pressures: rising costs related to ageing populations and a soaring demand for services, as well as medicine shortages, and an overstretched health and care workforce.

In the face of these challenges, no opportunity for more effective and people-centered health and care services should be left untapped, and we must apply what evidence has proved works with renewed rigor. Using behavioral and cultural insights for health policies, services and communications offers such an opportunity.

We know that behaviours – from the use and prescription of antibiotics, uptake of vaccination, alcohol and tobacco use, physical inactivity, to adherence to treatment and rehabilitation plans – lie at the heart of our most pressing public health challenges. Indeed, of all the factors affecting our health and well-being, behaviours have the greatest influence.

Robust methods, theoretical models and rich evidence exist in this field that can help inform evidence-based approaches to health behaviours. Knowing this, however, has so far not translated into sustainable investments by health organizations and authorities, and this field remains largely underutilized, underexplored and underfinanced in public health.

Newly reported data from public health authorities in the WHO European Region show that although many countries have been exploring the determinants of certain health behaviours and have used these insights to inform their work, this is rarely done systematically. In addition, the majority of countries report not having sustainable funding, human resources, effective stakeholder relations or national strategic plans in place to support this work.

Fortunately, light is on the horizon: on 13 September 2022, 53 WHO Member States in Europe and Central Asia unanimously adopted a resolution and action framework on the use of evidence-based approaches to health behaviours and this has inspired a global resolution in May 2023. With these resolutions, the WHO Regional Office for Europe is accelerating the use of behavioural and cultural insights (BCI) for health across Europe and Central Asia, under the European Programme of Work, and its flagship initiative on the same topic.

Read the full article: <https://academic.oup.com/eurpub/article/33/4/746/7235021?login=false>.

HEALTH TOPICS

Climate change

The global climate is changing. This affects human health, well-being and life on earth. In the near future it will lead to an amplification of current health problems, as well as new risks and pressures for the environment and the social and economic determinants of health.

Digital health

Digital health is the field of knowledge and practice associated with the development and use of digital technologies to improve health. Digital health expands the concept of eHealth to include digital consumers, with a wider range of smart devices and connected equipment. The following areas are commonly understood as being part of, or related to, digital health: artificial intelligence, big data, blockchain, health data, health information systems, the infodemic, the Internet of Things, interoperability and telemedicine.

Mental health

Mental health should be seen as a valued source of human capital or well-being in society. It contributes to individual and population health, happiness and welfare, enables social interaction, cohesion and security, and feeds national output and labour force productivity. We need good mental health to succeed in all areas of life.

Yet, individuals with mental ill-health are often shunned and denied access to care, with services for promoting and protecting mental health and preventing ill-health often starved of resources. It is vital to not only address the needs of people with defined mental disorders but also to protect and promote the mental health of all people, and recognize the intrinsic value of positive mental health.

Vaccines and immunization

Immunization is one of the most cost-effective ways to save lives and promote good health and well-being throughout the life course. Every year, vaccines save millions of lives, and millions more people are protected from disease and disability. By preventing many serious early-childhood infectious diseases, like polio and measles, immunization helps children grow into healthy adults. Other vaccines given early in life help prevent liver and cervical cancer many years later, and vaccination of older adults protects them from influenza, COVID-19 and other serious diseases.

The WHO European Region has made great progress in recent decades on many of these fronts, but there are still gaps in vaccination coverage that put especially the most vulnerable at risk. Access to vaccines, including against human papillomavirus and SARS-CoV2, is also not equitable within and among countries.

WHO PUBLICATIONS

WHO Global water, sanitation and hygiene: Annual report 2022



This report summarizes the World Health Organization's (WHO) global work on water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) during 2022. It describes how the Organization continued to deliver its essential WASH programming as elaborated in its 2018–2025 strategy.

This includes publication and dissemination of its work monitoring access to WASH and WASH systems through the WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme for Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene (JMP) and the UN-Water Global Analysis and Assessment of Sanitation and Drinking-Water (GLAAS), continued development and implementation of its norms on drinking-water and sanitation, and overall advocacy including on hand hygiene. All of WHO's work was augmented through the strength of its partnerships.

The publication is available at: <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240076297>.

WHO report on the global tobacco epidemic, 2023: protect people from tobacco smoke



The ninth *WHO report on the global tobacco epidemic* tracks the progress made by countries in tobacco control since 2008 and, marks 15 years since the introduction of the MPOWER technical package which is designed to help countries implement the demand-reduction measures of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control. The report shows that many countries continue to make progress in the fight against tobacco, but efforts must be accelerated to protect people from the harms of tobacco and second-hand smoke.

The knowledge guide is the second publication in the Self-care competency framework to support health and care workers. This describes how health and care workers can apply each of the 10 competency standards in their work, detailing the necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes that underpin the required behaviours.

The publication is available at: <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240077164>.

Exposure to lead: a major public health concern, 3rd edition

Lead is a toxic metal whose widespread use has caused extensive environmental contamination and health problems in many parts of the world. It is a cumulative toxicant that affects multiple body systems, including the neurological, haematological, gastrointestinal, cardiovascular and renal systems. Children are particularly vulnerable to the neurotoxic effects of lead, and even relatively low levels of exposure can cause serious and, in some cases, irreversible neurological damage.

Further efforts are required to continue to reduce the use and releases of lead, and to reduce environmental and occupational exposures, particularly for children and women of childbearing age. This document provides an updated information and guidance on lead poisoning interventions and concrete actions for decision makers.

This publication has been updated to include the latest information on lead-related burden of disease and is available at: <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240078130>.

Public health resource pack for countries experiencing outbreaks of influenza in animals



This public health resource pack collates currently available information primarily from WHO, the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the World Organization for Animal Health (WOAH) recommendations and guidelines on animal influenza, that might be relevant to a country experiencing outbreaks of influenza in animals or facing suspected cases of human infections with zoonotic influenza viruses.

The resource pack aims to provide an overview of the key information needed to advise countries on issues of human health during influenza outbreaks or detections in animals. Areas covered in this resource pack include some elements of the five components for health emergency preparedness, response and resilience: collaborative surveillance,

community protection, access to countermeasures, clinical care and emergency coordination.

This resource pack updates the information provided in the Summary of Key Information Practical to Countries Experiencing Outbreaks of A(H₅N₁) and Other Subtypes of Avian Influenza, published in 2016. Additionally, the scope of this current document was broadened to address the risks to public health from all animal influenza viruses, not only avian influenza. Links to existing resources were updated and new resources were added where available.

The publication is available at: <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240076884>.

Empowering youth in health emergencies: an implementation tool



Empowering youth in health emergencies:
an implementation tool



The active participation and engagement of young people in health emergency preparedness, response and recovery is crucial for increasing trust and empowering them to take informed decisions to protect themselves and others.

This implementation tool offers practice-based tips on how to engage with youth in emergency preparedness, response and recovery. The tips included in this implementation tool target mostly young adults from 18–24 years old, which are included in the WHO definition of adolescents and youth (2). However, the tips included in this toolkit can be applicable to a wider range of youth defined at national level. This implementation tool is part of a series of publications that provide practical tips for effectively engaging with different community actors and influencers in emergencies.

The target audience of this implementation tool includes health and other relevant authorities at national and subnational levels, UN agencies, including WHO at country level, civil society, and youth-serving organizations and other organizations interested in engaging with youth.

The publication is available at: <https://www.who.int/europe/publications/i/item/WHO-EURO-2023-7782-47550-69982>.

WHO STORIES

The kindness of strangers (www.who.int/europe/news/item/19-08-2023-the-kindness-of-strangers) by Dr Miljana Grbic, WHO Representative in the Republic of Moldova

“I will never forget the kindness of strangers.”

I have long been a provider of international humanitarian aid. But once I was a beneficiary of aid myself.

Decades ago, when my child was very young, our family, like many others affected by civil war, had to make the decision to flee our home because we could no longer guarantee that we would remain safe if we stayed.

Although my experience of being displaced was a long time ago, it has left lasting memories and continues to inform my decision-making as a humanitarian.

I will never forget planning for every step ahead, despite the overwhelming uncertainty about what tomorrow would bring.

When parents – including those, whose families are on the run – tell me of their concerns about how to access medical treatment if their child gets sick, or how to ensure they receive the vaccines to fight off infections, I understand their worries.

[...]

European Immunisation Week 2023 and the Big Catch-up – PHOTO STORY

www.who.int/europe/news-room/photo-stories/item/european-immunization-week-2023-and-the-big-catch-up

European Immunisation Week (EIW) takes place across the WHO European Region every year to raise awareness of the importance of immunisation in preventing diseases and protecting life. The EIW 2023 campaign on 23-29 April focused on timely routine vaccination and the need to catch up on any vaccinations missed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, while continuing to emphasize the need for COVID-19 vaccination, especially among vulnerable groups.

EIW 2023 was promoted via traditional and digital media platforms across the Region. The week-long campaign was covered by news media in at least 29 of the 53 countries in the Region, bringing attention to the global decline in vaccination rates during the pandemic and “**the Big Catch-up**” to rebuild population-wide protection. At the same time, targeted social media campaigns were launched by national health authorities, WHO, international partners, civil society organisations and professional associations in at least 26 countries.

Integrating traditional and modern medicine with compassion and care: A physician’s tale from Türkiye

www.who.int/europe/news/item/17-08-2023-integrating-traditional-and-modern-medicine-with-compassion-and-care-a-physicians-tale-from-turkiye

In the heart of Türkiye, in Istanbul, lies the tale of a physician whose quest for healing has led him to combine modern medicine with practices originating in the distant past.

Meet Dr Kanat Tayfun, a seasoned general practitioner turned pharmaceutical executive, who says he felt a yearning for a different impact on patient care that led him to explore how traditional medicine could complement modern medicine to possibly help bring about better health outcomes across a range of issues.

Traditional medicine refers to a collection of knowledge, practices, and beliefs adopted and absorbed over generations within various cultures, utilized for promoting health by preventing, diagnosing and treating physical and mental illness.

Robust scientific evidence for the effectiveness of traditional medicine has generally been very limited. Although globally many people find specific therapies helpful, in many cases this tends to be based on traditional use rather than exhaustive scientific research. However, the integration of traditional and modern medicine is increasingly the subject of scientific research on a number of fronts.

Sevgi's journey of hope propelled by traditional, complementary and integrative medicine

<https://www.who.int/europe/news/item/17-08-2023-sevgis-journey-of-hope-propelled-by-traditional-complementary-and-integrative-medicine>

Six years ago in Türkiye, Sevgi (name changed at person's request) and her husband dreamed of having a baby, but life took an unexpected turn when she was diagnosed with ovarian insufficiency.

Still, Sevgi didn't lose hope. While seeking support from her gynaecologist and preparing for fertility treatment, in autumn of 2017 Sevgi decided to also explore traditional medicine therapies to increase her chances of becoming a mother.

Traditional medicine is widely used globally to enhance health and treat conditions, particularly chronic diseases. The term encompasses a range of practices, such as herbal remedies, acupuncture, cupping therapy and homoeopathy.

Robust scientific evidence for the effectiveness of traditional medicine has generally been very limited. Although many people find specific therapies helpful, in many cases this tends to be based on traditional use rather than exhaustive scientific research. However, the integration of traditional and modern medicine is increasingly the subject of scientific research on a number of fronts.

"In about 3 months, I saw great results. My hormones were balanced, I was full of energy and started feeling more optimistic," shares Sevgi.

PODCASTS

Dialogues: A Conversation with Daisy Hernandez

<https://tdr.who.int/global-health-matters-podcast/dialogues-a-conversation-with-daisy-hernandez>

Dialogues is a new series from the Global Health Matters podcast that includes interviews with some of the world's sharpest global health minds and brightest thinkers. The goal of each Dialogue is to go beyond the echo chambers that exist in global health and to have in-depth conversations with guests who have explored global health issues from their multi-disciplinary perspectives.

In this episode of Dialogues, host [Garry Aslanyan](#) speaks with Daisy Hernández about her personal experience with Chagas disease (also known as American trypanosomiasis) and the journey she undertook to understand it while writing her book. Daisy is an essayist, memoirist and journalist. Her work focuses on the intersections of race, ethnicity, immigration, class and sexuality. She is the author of "[The Kissing Bug: A true story of a family, an insect and a nation's neglect of a deadly disease](#)" (Tin House, 2021), which won the PEN/Jean Stein Book Award and was named a top-10 non-fiction book of 2021 by *Time* magazine. This conversation reminds us, as global health professionals, to go beyond our public health silos and to present our work in a way that motivates experts, policy-makers and lay audiences towards greater action.

WHO EVENTS

WHO European regional consultation – Noncommunicable diseases in emergency preparedness and response: from permacrisis to resilience; 5-6 September 2023, Copenhagen, Denmark (hybrid event)

Noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) such as cancer, cardiovascular disease, diabetes and respiratory conditions are a major threat to people's health, leading to 90% of all deaths in the WHO European Region. This threat does not go away even during emergencies, and is often exacerbated as our attention is set on short-term or acute hazards, such as infections or traumas.

WHO/Europe has identified 15 countries and territories that are prone to emergencies due to geographical or other reasons, and where vulnerabilities in health systems can hinder abilities to respond to hazards.

The event will bring together prominent experts and decision-makers from across the European Region, to discuss:

- How can governments and health systems be prepared for future humanitarian crises?
- What challenges in managing NCDs have been revealed and what lessons learned during the COVID-19 pandemic, humanitarian crises and other disasters, both across the Region and globally?
- How can WHO support countries to integrate NCD prevention and management in emergency strategies?

[Streaming link – Noncommunicable diseases in emergency preparedness and response: from permacrisis to resilience.](#)

Second WHO Symposium on the Future of Digital Health Systems in the European Region; 5-6 September 2023, Porto, Portugal

Recent advancements in artificial intelligence (AI) in health have sparked public debate on the extent to which technology, and more specifically generative AI, has the potential to infringe upon personal privacy and impact the health of populations. To explore this and other issues impacting current and future European Region health system landscapes, WHO/Europe is hosting the second WHO Symposium on the Future of Digital Health Systems in the European Region on 5-6 September 2023.

To be held in Porto, Portugal, and co-organized with the Portuguese government, the symposium will bring together government representatives, key thought leaders, policy experts, academics, health-care workers, civil society representatives, professional organizations and other partners to help shape actions in support of the “Regional digital health action plan for the WHO European Region 2023–2030” approved at the Seventy-second session of the WHO Regional Committee for Europe in 2022.

Register [here](#).

The Sixth Bonn Dialogue on Environment and Health on the new report Reflecting on Progress in the WHO European Region towards the SDGs in the context of the Ostrava Declaration on Environment and Health: mid-way to 2030; 8 September 2023, 09:30-11:00 CEST, online

The WHO European Centre for Environment and Health, under the auspices of the European Environment and Health Process, is holding the sixth high-level Bonn Dialogue on Environment and Health. Main objectives of this Bonn Dialogue are to:

- Assess progress and identify challenges: to present progress of the WHO European Region towards the SDGs most relevant to the environment and health priorities of the Ostrava Declaration, utilizing official statistics. The Dialogue will highlight the thematic areas where progress has been assessed and identify challenges and gaps that need to be addressed.
- Exchange views on policy opportunities: to discuss emerging approaches and best practices on timely implementation of the environment and health commitments in relation to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
- Highlight tools for accelerated actions: to discuss the accelerated actions and tools to address the insufficient progress made (in some cases) as well as possible ways to enhance monitoring efforts for the priority areas listed in the declarations of the Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health.

This online event is open to members of the Environment and Health Task Force; anyone working on environment, health and sustainable development policies in national, regional and local governments; relevant stakeholders; youth; and the general public.

Register for the event here: https://who.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_6m1Ry5SxTlMrzfv0QQ6aKg#/registration.

25 August 2023

12th HEPA Europe conference: “Implementing health-enhancing physical activity research: from science to policy and practice”; 11-13 September 2023, Louvain, Belgium

The 18th annual meeting and 12th conference of Health-enhancing Physical Activity (HEPA) Europe will be held in Louvain, Belgium, on 11-13 September 2023.

The organising and scientific committees are preparing an excellent programme with the objective of engaging and connecting scientists, researchers, policy-makers, professionals, leading experts and other stakeholders to facilitate the implementation of knowledge in the field of health-enhancing physical activity.

To register visit: [HEPA 12th Conference](#).

WHO regional meeting on behavioural and cultural insights for health; 12-14 September 2023, Copenhagen, Denmark

Member State representatives and partners from the WHO European Region will meet in Copenhagen on 12-14 September 2023 to share experiences, tools and approaches on applying behavioural and cultural insights (BCI) for health.

Combining plenary presentations, facilitated discussions and focused topic break-out sessions, the meeting will advance implementation of the five-year “European regional action framework for behavioural and cultural insights for health”, agreed by Member States at the Seventy-second session of the WHO Regional Committee for Europe in September 2022.

The meeting will also provide an opportunity for BCI stakeholders in ministries of health, public health institutes and academia to discuss the findings of the first regional status report on BCI implementation, and the results of a qualitative study on the barriers and drivers in applying BCI for health. Participants will share case examples and lessons learned in using BCI in their respective countries.

WHO WEBINAR

Alcohol cultures and stigma

On 4 September 2023, WHO/Europe is holding a webinar in the series Alcohol and Public Health on the topic Alcohol cultures and stigma: overview of key concepts.

Speakers:

- Baroness Illora Finlay of Llandaff, former Chair of the Commission on Alcohol Harm, United Kingdom [TBC]
- Georg Schomerus, Professor and Chair, Department of Psychiatry and Psychotherapy, University of Leipzig, Germany

The webinar is part of the WHO/EU Evidence into Action Alcohol Project (EVID-ACTION), funded by the European Commission. The project's objective is to use scientific evidence to promote and facilitate the implementation of effective alcohol policies in the EU, Iceland, Norway, and Ukraine.

Register [here](#).

WHO VIDEOS

Check out our official video channel on YouTube for the latest video news on our work from around the globe:

<https://www.youtube.com/c/who/playlists>.

SOURCES

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