

WHO medicines strategy

The Fifty-fourth World Health Assembly,

Recalling resolutions, nominally WHA39.27, WHA41.16, WHA43.20, WHA45.27, WHA47.12, WHA47.16, WHA47.17, WHA49.14 and WHA52.19;

Having considered the report on the revised drug strategy,¹ and bearing in mind the previous report on the subject,² that highlight challenges related to international trade agreements, access to essential drugs, drug quality and rational use of medicines, together with the urgent need to improve access to drugs for treating priority health problems such as malaria, childhood illnesses, HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis, among others;

Acknowledging the four main objectives of WHO's medicines strategy, namely, to frame and implement policy; to ensure access; to ensure quality, safety and efficacy; and to promote rational use of medicines;

Taking into account that the aforementioned health problems are particularly acute among poor and vulnerable populations, entrapping them in poverty, and substantially inhibiting the growth of national and international economies to the detriment of all humanity;

Recalling that the Constitution of the World Health Organization provides that the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health is one of the fundamental rights of every human being without distinction of race, religion, political belief, economic or social condition, and considering that progressive realization of that right should involve access, on a non-discriminatory basis, to health facilities, prevention, care, treatment and support in the context of access to medicines;

Bearing in mind the WHO global framework for expanding access to essential drugs, and its four components: the rational selection and use of medicines, reliable health and supply systems, sustainable financing, and affordable prices;

Taking into account that access to medicines is particularly price sensitive, since most people in developing countries have to pay personally for health care, and that the commitment of governments,

¹ Document A54/17.

² Document A53/10.

organizations of the United Nations system, the private sector, and the civil society is necessary in order to achieve universal access;¹

Taking into account the urgency of implementing the WHO medicines strategy in order fully to realize the enormous health benefits that essential drugs can offer to the one-third of the human population now lacking them;

Taking into account the need to increase the current levels of international technical and economic assistance channeled to implementation of the WHO medicines strategy;

Recognizing the importance of national drug policies established in accordance with WHO guidelines;

Commending the strong leadership that WHO has shown in re-emphasizing the essential drugs concept, and the contribution of nongovernmental organizations working in public health to attaining such objectives as the framing of national drug policies and related aspects;

Noting that the impact of international trade agreements on access to, or local manufacturing of, essential drugs and on the development of new drugs needs to be further evaluated;

Recognizing that well-functioning and equitable health systems, including reliable supply systems, are key elements in any framework for expanding access to essential drugs;

Noting resolution 2001/33 on access to medication in the context of pandemics such as HIV/AIDS adopted by the United Nations Commission on Human Rights at its 57th session;

1. URGES Member States:

(1) to reaffirm their commitment to ensuring public health interests and to make every effort to promote equitable access to medicines, and to undertake the necessary action within their national health policies, including for priority diseases and pandemics, as an important element for progressively achieving the highest attainable standard of health;

(2) to take effective measures in accordance with international law and international agreements acceded to in order to ensure improved access to medicines;

(3) to cooperate with respect to resolution 2001/33 of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights;

(4) to pursue measures directed to expanding access of their populations to essential drugs, including the implementation of resolution WHA52.19 taking into account the cost-effectiveness of rational drug use as well as affordability;

(5) in order to increase access to medicines, and in accordance with the health needs of people, especially those who can least afford the costs, and recognizing the efforts of Member States to expand access to drugs and promote domestic industry, cooperate constructively in strengthening pharmaceutical policies and practices, including those applicable to generic drugs,

¹ Globalization, TRIPS and access to pharmaceuticals. WHO Policy Perspectives on Medicines, No. 3, March, 2001. Geneva: WHO (document WHO/EDM/2001.2).

and intellectual property regimes in order further to promote innovation and the development of domestic industries, consistent with applicable international law;

(6) to provide financial support and technical cooperation to enable Member States in need to expand access of their populations to essential drugs;

2. REQUESTS the Director-General:

(1) jointly with Member States, nongovernmental organizations and other partners involved in public health, to keep under review the effectiveness of the current strategy for essential drugs, and to stimulate the development of drugs for diseases whose burden lies predominantly in poor countries;

(2) to explore the feasibility and effectiveness of implementing, in collaboration with nongovernmental organizations and other concerned partners, systems for voluntary monitoring drug prices and reporting global drug prices with a view to improving equity in access to essential drugs in health systems, and to provide support to Member States in that regard;

(3) to provide support for implementation of drug monitoring systems in order better to identify development of resistance, adverse reactions and misuse of drugs within health systems, thus promoting rational use of drugs;

(4) to continue and to enhance efforts to study and report on existing and future health implications of international trade agreements in close cooperation with relevant intergovernmental organizations;

(5) to provide enhanced support to Member States that need and request support in achieving the priorities set out in the WHO medicines strategy;

(6) to provide support to Member States to set up efficient national regulatory mechanisms for quality assurance that will help ensure compliance with good manufacturing practices, bioavailability and bioequivalence;

(7) to continue WHO's work in the field of traditional medicines;

(8) to report to the Fifty-fifth World Health Assembly on the progress of initiatives taken, globally or regionally, to expand access to essential drugs.

Eighth plenary meeting, 21 May 2001
A54/VR/8

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