

Awards

1. In February 2023, during its 152nd session, the Executive Board adopted a number of decisions awarding prizes to individuals or entities in recognition of their outstanding contributions to public health development.¹

2. An award ceremony for the following five prizes is scheduled to take place during the plenary meeting of the Seventy-sixth World Health Assembly on Friday, 26 May 2023:

the **Sasakawa Health Prize** will be presented to the **Nick Simons Institute (Nepal)** and **Professor Vichai Tienthavorn (Thailand)**;

the **United Arab Emirates Health Foundation Prize** will be presented to **Dr Maria Asuncion Silvestre (Philippines)**;

the State of Kuwait Health Promotion Foundation's **His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah Prize for Research in Health Care for the Elderly and in Health Promotion** will be presented to **the National Center for Chronic and Noncommunicable Disease Control and Prevention (China)** and **Dr Abla Mehio Sibai (Lebanon)**;

the **Dr LEE Jong-wook Memorial Prize for Public Health** will be presented to **Dr Jorge Francisco Meneses (Guatemala)**; and

the **Nelson Mandela Award for Health Promotion** will be presented to **Dr Mariam Athbi Al Jalahma (Bahrain)**.

3. Many of the prizes have been established by, or set up in memory of, an eminent health personality or an individual with a legacy in the field of health. The call for nominations of candidates for each prize is sent out each year after closure of the Health Assembly session, and nominations can be made by national health administrations of a Member State of WHO and by any former recipient of the prizes. The recipients of the prizes are designated by the Executive Board during its first annual session, on the basis of recommendations made by the selection panel for each prize.

4. Over the years, the prizes have been awarded to a wide range of recipients: well-known scientists and researchers; other dedicated individuals or entities who have greatly contributed through their work to the advancement of public health; and to institutions caring for the health of local communities.

5. Further information on the prizes and on the 2023 recipients is provided in the Annex to the present document.²

¹ See decisions EB152(24), EB152(25), EB152(26), EB152(27) and EB152(28) (2023).

² See also the information on awards on the WHO website (<https://apps.who.int/gb/awards/>, accessed 25 April 2023).

ANNEX

PRIZES AWARDED IN 2023

1. Sasakawa Health Prize

The Sasakawa Health Prize is awarded for outstanding innovative work in health development to a person or persons, an institution or institutions, or a nongovernmental organization or organizations. Such work includes the promotion of given health programmes or notable advances in primary health care.

The 2023 laureates of the prize are the Nick Simons Institute (Nepal) and Professor Vichai Tienthavorn (Thailand).

The Nick Simons Institute is a nongovernmental organization that aims to improve health care and innovatively fill health workforce gaps that the health system faces in rural areas of Nepal. The Institute works closely with the Ministry of Health and Population of Nepal to train medical professionals (such as midwives and anaesthetic assistants) in rural areas, to enable them to provide the services that are most needed by the local population. Some 7000 professionals have received such “upgrader” training. The Institute also implements its Curative Service Support Programme, which supplies essential equipment to hospitals and provides targeted additional human resources to help to solve the issue of the lack of medical professionals in rural areas. A total of 44 hospitals have already benefited from this programme. The Institute also subsidizes the living costs of doctors and health workers in order to increase retention of these much-needed individuals in rural areas. The Hospital Strengthening Programme, the third key programme run by the Institute, uses a tool called Minimum Service Standards to help to identify gaps in readiness to improve the quality of hospital services and develop an action plan for improvement. A total of 119 hospitals have benefited from the Hospital Strengthening Programme since 2015. In addition, the Institute conducts research and advocacy activities to shape perceptions and influence policies that affect rural health workers and health care systems in Nepal. The Institute would like to use the award to invest in training in newborn care at the hospitals it supports and in motivating and rewarding selected outstanding rural health workers.

Professor Vichai Tienthavorn is President of the Praboromarajchanok Institute, which is under the Ministry of Public Health of Thailand. He has been involved in three major initiatives. The first relates to the prevention and control of thalassemia in Thailand. As the Director-General of the Department of Health, he developed an innovative policy entitled “Choose Partners, Choose to Be Pregnant, and Choose to Deliver”, to reduce the prevalence of severe thalassemia in Thailand. In the light of the policy’s positive impact, Professor Tienthavorn promoted its adoption at ministerial level as the national policy for thalassemia prevention and control. The second major initiative is “7-Colour Traffic Light Ping Pong”, a communication tool Professor Tienthavorn designed while he was Dean of the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Phayao in Thailand, to help individuals to improve their behaviours in order to prevent and control diabetes and hypertension. The tool is a basic screening method for diabetes and hypertension that can reduce the rate of medication intake, save travelling and medical service costs of local populations and reduce public health officers’ workload. This simple and effective approach has contributed to addressing the severe challenge of noncommunicable diseases in this middle-income country. A national policy was formulated based on this tool. The third major initiative addresses the challenge of the maldistribution of the health workforce, especially in border and rural areas of the country. The Praboromarajchanok Institute, headed by Professor Tienthavorn, formed partnerships with nearly all village schools to recruit high school students, train them and help them to

settle back locally. An accelerated medical curriculum to train the local health workforce has also been developed to address the needs of communities where there is a shortage of staff. Professor Tienthavorn would like to use the award to further expand partnerships with schools, give one-year training courses to village health volunteers to enable them to become nurses, and pursue efforts to adapt the health care curriculum to address the needs of the most underserved communities in Thailand.

2. United Arab Emirates Health Foundation Prize

The United Arab Emirates Health Foundation Prize is awarded for an outstanding contribution to health development to a person or persons, an institution or institutions, or a nongovernmental organization or organizations.

The 2023 laureate of the prize is Dr Maria Asuncion Silvestre (Philippines).

Dr Maria Asuncion Silvestre is a renowned clinician, a passionate advocate for exclusive breastfeeding and the founder of a nongovernmental organization called Kalusugan ng Mag-Ina (Health of Mother and Child) in the Philippines. Dr Silvestre has used her experience as a private practitioner in her community and has drawn on her research findings, with evidence collected from the field, to improve the health of mothers and newborns. She has designed a pioneering protocol called Essential Intrapartum and Newborn Care, consisting of a simple set of choreographed actions for health workers attending a mother during delivery and her newborn immediately after birth and during the first week of her or his life. Her objective was to propose an affordable set of interventions, which would be replicable in all resource settings and thus help to bridge the health equity gap, and ensure optimal conditions for exclusive breastfeeding. In the light of her research findings, Dr Silvestre's efforts, to influence medical curricula in the Philippines, to closely partner with public health authorities to expand the scope of her research and to design evidence-based policies that serve the most vulnerable populations have been remarkable. She has numerous publications and has undertaken pro bono teaching. Her work has helped to save countless lives at the national level and beyond, having collaborated with 17 countries of the WHO Western Pacific Region to scale up the First Embrace campaign for Early Essential Newborn Care, a set of simple WHO-recommended and cost-effective interventions that her work has helped to shape. She has tirelessly invested her time and expertise in being a member of numerous regional and international technical groups to help to advance primary health care.

3. His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah Prize for Research in Health Care for the Elderly and in Health Promotion

His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah Prize for Research in Health Care for the Elderly and in Health Promotion is awarded to a person or persons, an institution or institutions, or a nongovernmental organization or organizations having made an outstanding contribution to research in the areas of health care for the elderly and in health promotion.

The 2023 laureates of the prize are the National Center for Chronic and Noncommunicable Disease Control and Prevention (China) and Dr Ablah Mehio Sibai (Lebanon).

The National Center for Chronic and Noncommunicable Disease Control and Prevention, part of the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention, has hosted a department focusing on the health of older people since 2013. It delivers a broad range of programmes and activities that advance health promotion for older people, including the development of a death registry and conducting national surveillance for noncommunicable diseases and nationally representative surveys on health literacy in

older age, which help to develop evidence-based policies. The National Center has also designed programmes to promote health literacy in response to the findings of these surveys, including a dedicated toolkit for older people. In addition to a pilot project on disabilities and prevention of dementia, the National Center has put together an innovative project to improve the mental and cognitive health of more than half a million older persons in both urban and rural areas. The project involves capacity-building of 2000 primary care staff and the establishment of a mental health database on older people, to better understand their needs. The National Center has also developed activities on health communication and health promotion, such as a health advocacy week dedicated to older people. The National Center has also conducted an ambitious body of research and has published a series of reports on the health of older persons.

Dr Abla Mehio Sibai is Dean of the Faculty of Health Sciences at the American University of Beirut in Lebanon. She is a well-known academic, lecturer and researcher on ageing and noncommunicable diseases in her country. Her numerous achievements span a remarkably broad range of areas, including research, data, policy, programme development and training, which form a holistic approach to the promotion of healthy ageing. She has developed innovative programmes that support lifelong learning and older people's health and continued contribution to society, enrolling 600 older people every year at the University for Seniors at the American University of Beirut. Dr Sibai has directly contributed to training clinicians on healthy ageing and has advanced research on ageing by coauthoring hundreds of articles, 20 book chapters and 70 reports that have been frequently cited. She co-led the landmark WHO Global Burden of Disease Study in Lebanon (2000) and conducted the first national survey on noncommunicable diseases and risk factors, using the WHO STEPwise approach (2008–2010), the country's main source of data for the Ministry of Public Health, informing advocacy, policy-making and programme planning for health promotion. Dr Sibai has led the development of the national strategy for older persons in Lebanon (2020–2030). In her work, she has been attentive to leaving no one behind, with a specific focus on older refugees in situations requiring a humanitarian response. In addition, she created the Arab Ageing Network and the Centre for Studies on Ageing to provide appropriate platforms, networks and links between research and policy at the national, regional and international levels. She has made an outstanding contribution to older people's health in Lebanon and the region.

4. Dr LEE Jong-wook Memorial Prize for Public Health

The Dr LEE Jong-wook Memorial Prize for Public Health is awarded to a person or persons, an institution or institutions, a governmental or nongovernmental organization or organizations, who have made an outstanding contribution to public health.

The 2023 laureate of the prize is Dr Jorge Francisco Meneses (Guatemala).

Dr Jorge Francisco Meneses started his career as a physician at the Retalhuleu National Hospital in Retalhuleu, Guatemala, where he promoted community participation in hospital care for over 20 years, thanks to the set-up of community-based committees. In the light of the positive impact of his work, the model of ethical and patient-centred care that he designed during these years was scaled up at the national level and Dr Meneses became the national supervisor for hospitals. In this role, Dr Meneses implemented the Continuous Performance and Quality Improvement programme, which he helped to design, in 13 hospitals of the national hospital network, in partnership with the Ministry of Health. The programme has resulted in improving the quality of patient care, by focusing on the safety and satisfaction of patients, their families and the community. In recent years, Dr Meneses has coordinated a pilot project in the Guatemala South Health Area for the implementation of the first integrated network of health services in the country. The pilot includes providing health services to underserved

communities and setting up network integration mechanisms for health services, such as a unique patient identification number, electronic medical records, appointment scheduling for any health service and unified care protocols at different levels of care. His work led to the adoption of a national strategy of integrated health services networks of Guatemala, in line with the primary health care strategy promoted by PAHO, making Guatemala the only country in Central America to have such a strategy.

5. Nelson Mandela Award for Health Promotion

The Nelson Mandela Award for Health Promotion is awarded to a person or persons, an institution or institutions, a governmental or nongovernmental organization or organizations, who or which has/have made a significant contribution to health promotion.

The 2023 laureate of the award is Dr Mariam Athbi Al Jalahma (Bahrain).

Dr Mariam Athbi Al Jalahma is the Chief Executive Officer of the National Health Regulatory Authority of Bahrain and has held various leadership positions in government and academic institutions in her country. Dr Al Jalahma has played a major role in the development of the National Health Plan, the Primary Healthcare Strategy, the Strategic Plan for the Ministry of Health, the National Plan for Childhood and the National Plan for the Empowerment of Women in Bahrain. In addition, as Assistant Undersecretary for Primary Care and Public Health, she led the development of the Strategy of National Health Regulatory Authority and reviewed and implemented Bahrain's antismoking policies. Dr Al Jalahma has also implemented a national accreditation system for health institutions in Bahrain, which received a government best practice award. As Chief Executive Officer, she led the National Health Regulatory Authority's initiative towards digital transformation, to enable the Authority to become a Digital Health Regulator Model in the Gulf Cooperation Council. Her initiatives to increase the Authority's revenue and efficiency – including securing an increase in fees to be paid to the Authority, outsourcing verification of health practitioners' certificates and contracting the test administration industry to conduct examinations for health professionals – have helped to rationalize spending and encourage excellence in the medical sector. During her membership of the Shura Council, remarkable results were achieved in the area of health promotion, including implementation of a law on premarital screening, a campaign for early detection of heart disease in the workplace and an early screening clinic for chronic diseases and breast cancer in primary care centres. She has also demonstrated her deep commitment to health promotion by engaging in awareness-raising activities on radio and television shows aired across all countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council. In addition, when a member of the Executive Body of the Council of Health Ministers of the Gulf Cooperation Council, she contributed to the development of health plans, such as combating chronic diseases, antismoking and adolescent health, covering all countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council.

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