

**ISN comments on WHO Draft Concept Note towards WHO's 13th
General Programme of Work 2019–2023:
'Keep the World Safe, Improve Health, Serve the Vulnerable'**

The International Society of Nephrology (ISN) is the leading health professional organisation whose mission is to ensure a future where all people have equitable access to sustainable kidney health. With over 10.000 professional members from over 150 countries, ISN seeks to bridge the gaps in global kidney health, build communities and engage in collaborative efforts to improve kidney disease prevention, diagnosis and treatment. ISN is a non-state actor in official relations with the World Health Organisation (WHO) since 2013 and welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on the draft Concept Note towards WHO's 13th General Programme of Work 2019–2023.

The risk of kidney disease begins in utero spanning the life-course, from fetal development to old age, is increased by infectious diseases such as HIV and malaria, by NCDs such as diabetes, hypertension, cardiovascular disease, by environmental and occupational conditions, poverty, lack of education, gender inequality, pollution, natural disasters and conflict. Epidemics of kidney disease are leading causes of death among young adults and women in some regions. Kidney disease can be successfully prevented or delayed with early detection and access to simple affordable generic medication. Millions die yearly, predominantly in lower income countries, because of lack of access to early and appropriate care. Good governance and transparent priority setting are urgently required to address massive inequalities in access to kidney care across the globe. The ISN therefore strongly endorses the 6 domains of "what WHO will do differently", which are all highly relevant to identify and tackle the global burden of kidney disease.

Below we have shared some comments and suggestions which we hope WHO will take into account during the drafting and finalization of the 13th General Programme of Work 2019–2023.

General Comments

ISN supports WHO's commitment to focus on real health outcomes and impacts together with its ambition to provide strong political leadership to member states as well as increased operational support at the local level. The renewed commitment to implementing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with particular reference to Universal Health Coverage (UHC) as a priority target, is very important and particularly relevant to NCDs, including kidney disease.

Strategic and Leadership Priorities

- **NCD pandemic should be addressed as a global health priority**

ISN notes that at the moment, NCDs are not a prominent feature in the five

leadership priorities outlined in the Concept Note but that are listed among the SDG targets to be addressed by WHO in the 13th General Programme of Work 2019–2023. We would like the opportunity to make the case for the major burden of NCDs, and their importance in a changing world order. Although epidemics are important and must be addressed, the silent pandemic of NCDs should receive equal emphasis.

NCDs are now the cause of 70% of the world's deaths - an astounding 40 million deaths worldwide.¹ Faced by this global pandemic, it is clear that global health authorities must now increase their efforts to tackle NCDs as an urgent global health priority. Most NCDs are the product of multiple risk factors which span all the SDGs and the ISN is encouraged by the ongoing support for a comprehensive and multisectoral approach to tackle NCDs, thereby stressing the critical role of prevention as the most effective tool to combat NCDs in future generations.

ISN urges WHO to take a strong stance against NCDs in the forthcoming General Programme of Work. A comprehensive and integrated approach across NCDs is required and should be fully supported with appropriate budget allocations.

The recent announcement of the creation of a High Level Global Commission on NCDs is encouraging and we are hopeful that this initiative will take concrete steps to reducing the burden of NCDs. We await further detail on the Commission's proposed activities.

- **A comprehensive and integrated approach to is required to reduce NCD burden**

55% of the global NCD burden arises from NCDs other than the big four cardiovascular disease, cancer, diabetes or chronic respiratory disease². Those 'neglected' NCDs tend to be underestimated in terms of premature mortality and quality of life reduction.

ISN thus encourages WHO's 13th General Programme of Work 2019–2023 to go beyond the prioritization of the 4 major NCDs and 4 risk factors and to take into account the significant burden of other NCDs, which are often closely linked to the major non-communicable diseases.

It is important that the WHO's 13th General Programme of Work 2019–2023, within the context of the recently created High Level Global Commission on NCDs, does highlight the synergies between the 4 major NCDs and other diseases. Clearly there is a need to call for a comprehensive and integrated approach to tackling the overall burden of NCDs, which leaves no patient behind. This approach is in line with the

¹ <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs355/en/>

² 'Remembering the forgotten non-communicable diseases'

Alan D Lopez, Thomas N Williams, Adeera Levin, Marcello Tonelli, Jasvinder A Singh, Peter GJ Burney, Jürgen Rehm, Nora D Volkow, George Koob and Cleusa P Ferri

BMC Medicine 2014;12:200, <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12916-014-0200-8>

© Lopez et al.; licensee BioMed Central Ltd. 2014

Received: 3 October 2014, <https://bmcmmedicine.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12916-014-0200-8>

recommendations of the WHO Global Action Plan (2013-2020), which states that a comprehensive response to the prevention and control of NCDs must take into account “synergies between the 4 major communicable diseases and other conditions” (including kidney disease).³

Specific amendments suggested

1) For coherence with the table of strategic priorities listed under “WHO’s vision, mission, strategy on page 4, ISN suggest the following paragraph on page 3 of the concept note to be included in the WHO 13th General Programme as follows: *‘WHO will set priorities based on the clear endorsement by member states of five leadership priorities (health emergencies, universal health coverage; women, children and adolescent health; **communicable and noncommunicable diseases**; climate and environmental change; and transforming WHO).’*

2) Looking specifically at the “WHO’s vision, mission, strategy” summary table on page 4 of the concept note, we strongly recommend including the following targets in the WHO 13th General Programme:

- Strategic priority *‘Lead on health related SDGs including women, children and adolescents; climate and environmental change; communicable and noncommunicable diseases’*:
 - Outcome / Impact target: Please add explicit target to **reducing NCDs morbidity by xx%**. This is in line with the specific aim of WHO as stated in the Concept Note to focus on measurable impacts of health policies.
 - Outcome / Impact Target: Please add explicit target to **80% availability of the affordable basic technologies and essential medicines, including generics, required to treat major NCDs diseases**. This is in line with Target 9 of the WHO Global Action Plan (2013-2020). Essential medicines should be those listed in the WHO list of essential medicines such as peritoneal dialysis solution and hypertension and ACE inhibitors (http://www.who.int/entity/medicines/publications/essentialmedicines/20th_EML2017_FINAL_amendedAug2017.pdf?ua=1)
- Strategic priority *‘Help countries to achieve universal health coverage’*:
 - Outcome / impact target: please add a target on **increasing the fraction of the population protected against catastrophic/impoverishing out-of-pocket health expenditure by xx %**. This is in line with the specific aim of WHO to focus on measurable impacts of health policies and guide & support member states towards the implementation of UHC.
- Strategic Priority: *‘Provide the world’s platform for collective decision-making in*

³ WHO Global Action Plan for the Prevention and Control of Non-Communicable Diseases (2013-2020); pg. 57-59

health'

Outcome / impact target: please add two target on (1) '**accurate determination of disease burdens**' and (2) '**development of robust health information systems**'. Given the experience of the kidney community with the challenges of highly inequitable access to expensive therapies we suggest inclusion of a statement on implementation of strategies to support and enhance transparent and fair priority setting as a necessary process in decision making in health towards progressive realization of UHC. An important outcome to facilitate the priority setting process is to support accurate determination of disease burdens and support development of robust health information systems.