

TEN THREATS TO GLOBAL HEALTH IN 2019

The world is facing multiple health challenges, ranging from outbreaks of vaccine-preventable diseases like measles and diphtheria, increasing reports of drug-resistant pathogens, growing rates of obesity and physical inactivity to the health impacts of environmental pollution and climate change and multiple humanitarian crises.

The WHO have identified ten threats to global health. The World Health Organization's new 5-year strategic plan begins in 2019 and will address these and other threats. The plan focuses on a triple billion target: ensuring 1 billion more people benefit from access to universal health coverage; 1 billion more people are protected from health emergencies; and 1 billion more people enjoy better health and well-being.

<https://www.who.int/emergencies/ten-threats-to-global-health-in-2019>

Air pollution and climate change

Nine out of ten people in the world breathe polluted air every day. In 2019, air pollution is considered by the WHO as the greatest environmental risk to health.



Non communicable diseases

Non communicable diseases, such as diabetes, cancer and heart disease, are collectively responsible for over 70% of all deaths worldwide. The rise of these diseases has been driven by five major risk factors: tobacco use, physical inactivity, the harmful use of alcohol, unhealthy diets and air pollution.



Global influenza pandemic

The world will face another influenza pandemic: the only thing we don't know is when it will hit and how severe it will be. Global defences are only as effective as the weakest link in any country's health emergency preparedness and response system.



Fragile and vulnerable settings

More than 1.6 billion people (22% of the global population) live in places where protracted crises (through a combination of challenges such as drought, famine, conflict, and population displacement) and weak health services leave them without access to basic care. Fragile settings exist in almost all the regions of the world.



Antimicrobial resistance

The development of antibiotics, antivirals and antimalarials are some of modern medicine's greatest successes. Antimicrobial resistance – the ability of bacteria, parasites, viruses and fungi to resist these medicines – threatens to send us back to a time when we were unable to easily treat infections such as pneumonia, tuberculosis, gonorrhoea, and salmonellosis. The inability to prevent infections could seriously compromise surgery and procedures such as chemotherapy.



Ebola and other high threat pathogens

The WHO strategic plan identifies diseases and pathogens that have the potential to cause a public health emergency, but lack effective treatments and vaccines. The watchlist includes Ebola, several other haemorrhagic fevers, Zika, Nipah, Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and disease X, which represents an unknown pathogen that could cause a serious epidemic.



Weak primary health care

Primary health care is usually the first point of contact people have with their health care system, and ideally should provide comprehensive, affordable, community-based care throughout life. Primary health care can meet the majority of a person's health needs of the course of their life. Health systems with strong primary health care are needed to achieve universal health coverage. Yet many countries do not have adequate primary health care facilities.



Vaccine hesitancy

Vaccine hesitancy – the reluctance or refusal to vaccinate despite the availability of vaccines – threatens to reverse progress made in tackling vaccine-preventable diseases. Vaccination is one of the most cost-effective ways of avoiding disease.



Dengue

Dengue, a mosquito-borne disease that causes flu-like symptoms and can be lethal and kill up to 20% of those with severe dengue, has been a growing threat for decades. An estimated 40% of the world is at risk of dengue fever.



HIV

The progress made against HIV has been enormous in terms of getting people tested, providing them with antiretrovirals, and providing access to preventive measures such as a pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP). However, the HIV epidemic continues to rage with nearly a million people every year dying of HIV and AIDS.

WHO TRIPLE BILLION TARGETS

Universal health coverage

One billion more people benefitting from universal health coverage without financial hardship. Two key components will be measured: coverage of essential health services and financial hardship.

Health emergencies protection

One billion more people better protected from health emergencies. Three aspects will be measured: emergency preparedness, emergency prevention, and emergency detection and response.

Healthier populations

One billion more people enjoying better health and wellbeing. Sixteen indicators will be measured: stunting among children under 5; overweight children under 5; wasting among children under 5; suicide mortality; harmful use of alcohol; death rate due to road traffic injuries; tobacco use; children under 5 who are developmentally on track; partner violence against women; safely managed drinking water; safely managed sanitation services; primary reliance on clean fuels and technology; ambient air quality; violence against children; obesity; and trans fats policy.

<https://www.who.int/data/stories/the-triple-billion-targets-a-visual-summary-of-methods-to-deliver-impact>