

Reimagining our response to non-communicable diseases (NCDs) and mental health

Reflections on the draft Political Declaration for the UN High Level Meeting on the Prevention and Control of NCDs and the Promotion of Mental Health and Well-being

In September, governments gathering as part of the UN General Assembly in New York will agree a new Political Declaration on NCDs and Mental Health.

In the draft Declaration, we welcome reaffirmation of the primary role and responsibility governments have in responding to the challenge of NCDs and mental health, as well as the designation of focused targets for tobacco control, hypertension control, and mental health access. However, with progress largely stalled since the last UN meeting in 2018, we urge Member States to seize this opportunity to tackle the most pressing NCDs head on by leveraging health innovation, strengthening prevention and early action for lifelong health, and addressing multimorbidity through an integrated approach.

Below, we outline these three key areas to strengthen the text of the Declaration and the impact it can have on future health.



Non-communicable diseases are a set of complex, chronic, and often interconnected diseases. They include cardiovascular, renal, and metabolic conditions, cancer, lung diseases, and mental health and neurological conditions.

As of 2021, they accounted for more than 43 million deaths, with one in three people globally living with at least one NCD.

Leverage health innovation

Medicines, diagnostics, and vaccines have transformed the prevention, treatment, and control of NCDs and mental health around the world, and the next generation of medical developments will bring further progress. Our industry has delivered virtually all NCD and mental health medicines and vaccines in use today, many of which are now in generic or biosimilar form and which are critical in changing the course of disease, improving or saving countless lives and lowering costs for healthcare systems worldwide.

In the past decade alone, the industry has launched more than **1,400 medicines** for NCDs and mental health. Today, there are over **9,600 medicines** for NCDs and mental health in clinical development globally, driven by pharmaceutical companies, biotech companies, academic institutions, and medical research charities. They have the potential to prevent disease and disease progression, transforming lives for the better, and supporting the sustainability of healthcare systems.

To maximize impact for people at risk of or living with NCDs and mental health conditions, we must work together to enable medical innovation. This requires stronger recognition of the critical role played by many parts of the private sector that drive health innovation, including industries responsible for biopharmaceuticals, biotech, diagnostics, medical devices, vaccines, diagnostic imaging as well as digital health.



ASK:

We must agree stronger language acknowledging that medical innovation driven by the private sector plays a critical role for NCD prevention, diagnosis, treatment, and control. This can be done by reinforcing the important contribution of the private sector in supporting health system strengthening and the delivery of quality and affordable healthcare services, as stated in the 2023 Universal Health Coverage (UHC) Political Declaration.

In March 2025, IFPMA issued a call to action ahead of the UN High-Level Meeting on NCDs and Mental Health. This included four policy priorities, urging Member States to:



Enable innovation

Foster a healthy innovation ecosystem and improve awareness and uptake of medical innovation to address the NCD and mental health burden. This should include essential and innovative NCD medicines, vaccines, diagnostics, and medical devices, supported by appropriate health service delivery models.



Mobilize investment

Commit to invest more efficiently and effectively in strengthening health systems and to have concrete and actionable financing plans for NCDs and mental health so that we can more equitably reach individuals with integrated prevention, treatment, and care.



Drive implementation

Deliver effective programs and policies to ensure equitable access to NCD prevention, treatment, and care for all. Strengthen national health systems by integrating early screening, diagnosis, vaccination, comprehensive treatment options, and rehabilitation programs that effectively reach and address the needs of people living with NCDs and mental health conditions.



Ensure accountability

Implement measures to ensure accountability and high standards across all relevant sectors of government and key health stakeholders to accurately improve and report on delivery of NCDs and mental health prevention, treatment, and care. This includes a focus on monitoring the impact of vaccination, early screening, diagnosis, and treatment programs.



[Read our call to action](#)

Strengthen prevention and early action for lifelong health

Prevention is a strategic imperative to reduce the growing burden of NCDs and mental health. An effective response must deliver a full continuum of care—prevention, early diagnosis, and early treatment—to avoid complications, protect health systems, and support lifelong well-being. Medical innovation is central to this effort, enabling healthier ageing, cognitive function, and improved outcomes.

Immunization is a key pillar—helping protect older people and those living with NCDs from infectious diseases, particularly respiratory infections such as COVID-19, seasonal influenza, pneumococcal disease, and respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) - that can worsen their health, disrupt treatment pathways, or accelerate decline. The flu vaccine may reduce the risk of death from [stroke by 50%](#) and from [heart attack by 45%](#). Beyond mitigation, vaccines also reduce the risk of developing certain cancers by preventing infections linked to their onset. For example, HPV- and hepatitis-related cancers, including cervical and liver cancers, are among those that can be averted.

That said, vaccines—alongside other immunization modalities—are one part of the solution. Equally vital are early diagnosis and timely access to innovative treatments—critical to halting disease progression, preserving cognitive and physical function, and reducing avoidable costs for health systems and society. Together, these interventions can reduce the burden of multimorbidity and strengthen system-wide resilience.



ASK:

We urge increased investment in integrated primary healthcare—spanning the full continuum of prevention, early diagnosis, and timely, innovative treatment. We support a specific reference to the need for more investment in primary and secondary prevention, given the significant positive impact this could have on reduction of hospitalizations, lost productivity from premature deaths, and relief to pressure on health systems.

Immunization—beyond its role in cancer prevention—must be recognized for protecting older people and those living with NCDs from infectious diseases, particularly respiratory infections, like COVID-19, influenza, pneumococcal disease, and RSV. It should be included in a balanced strategy to protect high-risk groups and support lifelong health.

Address multimorbidity through an integrated approach

Today, 30-40% of people living with NCDs globally are living with multiple morbidities, posing an enormous challenge to health systems. We can significantly bend the curve if we promote a more integrated approach to prevention, diagnosis, treatment, and care.

Cardiovascular, renal, and metabolic conditions (CVRM) conditions, including obesity, are often preventable, highly interconnected, and drive multimorbidity. They make up **almost 50%** of all NCD deaths. From a health systems perspective, interventions on CVRM represent highly cost-effective measures that could yield enormous savings if properly implemented.

Mental health and NCDs are also deeply interconnected. Individuals with NCDs such as diabetes and heart disease are at significantly higher risk of experiencing mental health challenges. Addressing the mental health and psychosocial needs of all who are living with NCDs—from children to older people—is essential for improving treatment adherence, health outcomes, and overall well-being.

Similarly, there is a significant connection between chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) and cardiovascular disease – **all patients with COPD** are at risk of cardiopulmonary events. Patients with COPD have an approximately **10x** increased risk of severe cardiovascular events in the first seven days after an exacerbation of any severity, underscoring the importance of an integrated approach.



ASK:

We support more emphasis on interconnected conditions that require an integrated approach to prevention, diagnosis, treatment and care. This includes more referencing to the cluster of CVRM conditions, and a specific call-out of chronic kidney disease (CKD) as part of this, given its significance in morbidity and mortality. We call for Member States to reaffirm commitment to WHO's Acceleration Plan to Stop Obesity, recognizing it as a major contributor to CVRM disease burden and rising global healthcare costs.

We support the inclusion of agreed language that promotes greater awareness of serious mental health conditions, including underlying neurodegenerative conditions and other comorbidities. We support consistent referencing to mental health conditions and neurological disorders throughout the Declaration, ensuring appropriate emphasis, integration, and operationalization of mental health within the NCDs agenda.

About IFPMA

IFPMA represents the innovative pharmaceutical industry at the international level, engaging in official relations with the United Nations and multilateral organizations. Our vision is to ensure that scientific progress translates into the next generation of medicines and vaccines that deliver a healthier future for people everywhere. To achieve this, we act as a trusted partner, bringing our members' expertise to champion pharmaceutical innovation, drive policy that supports the research, development, and delivery of health technologies, and create sustainable solutions that advance global health.

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Find out more about our work on NCDs:

