

Agenda Item 5.7 Medicines, Vaccines and Health Products: Access to Medicines and Vaccines

Global Health Council, supported by AAP, NCD Child, and GHTC supports on-going efforts to support equitable access to medicines. We call for improved financing and expanded research and development. We call on WHO to ensure that applications for the Essential Medicine List also provide data, or a note that data is lacking, for inclusion on the Essential Medicine List for Children.

We encourage WHO to support a comprehensive approach to improving access to essential health technologies. We note that a holistic approach considering all aspects impacting affordability, acceptability, availability, and quality is the best means to improve equitable access and promote innovation. Insufficient efforts to adapt medicines originally developed for adults for use in children remains an ongoing challenge. Challenges to progress on the availability of drugs for children include lack of adequate authority to require pediatric studies, methodologic and ethical requirements for pediatric trials, research and development costs, patient recruitment in clinical trials, and failure to require medicine formulations suitable for children (such as liquids, suspensions, sprinkles, and dissolvable or chewable tablets).

TB provides an example of WHO policies can either facilitate or hamper access. WHO recommends that high-burden countries base TB diagnoses on sputum microscopy, a process which often misses children. Furthermore, in 2015 the 20th WHO Expert Committee decided to include five new medicines in the anti-tuberculosis medicines section of the WHO Model List of Essential Medicines, yet did not include medicines on the children's list, even though TB affects approximately 1 million children annually, 125,000 of whom do not survive.

WHO can leverage the expertise of innovative structures to secure sustainable access commitments, to accelerate the development of essential health technologies for all conditions.