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New York



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Thematic Dialogue Series on Non-communicable Diseases and Mental Health:

Prevention, Treatment, and Rehabilitation of Noncommunicable Diseases and Promotion of Mental Health

Date: 21 January 2025

Time: 1:15 – 2:45 PM

Venue: Ford Foundation Center for Social Justice, 320 E 43rd St., New York, NY

Co-sponsors: Antigua and Barbuda, Belgium, Brazil, Ghana, and Georgia, Japan, and Thailand in their capacity as co-chairs of the Group of Friends of UHC, along with the World Health Organization (WHO), and the UN Foundation

SUMMARY

As part of an ongoing series of discussions to prepare for the Fourth High-Level Meeting of the UN General Assembly on Non-communicable Diseases (NCDs) and Mental Health in September 2025, Antigua and Barbuda, Belgium, Brazil, Ghana, and Georgia, Japan, and Thailand in their capacity as co-chairs of the Group of Friends of UHC, along with the World Health Organization (WHO), and the UN Foundation are co-hosting an interactive dialogue focused on the challenges and best practices of prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation of NCDs and promotion of mental health across the life course.

This discussion, held under the Chatham House rule of non-attribution, aims to provide a platform for Member States and global health partners to reflect on the readiness of health systems to provide NCD and mental health services. It will discuss key opportunities for a primary health care-oriented health system to provide a continuum of interventions, spotlighting issues related to health products and technologies, health and care workers, and the power of data.

BACKGROUND

Delivering a continuum of interventions for NCDs and mental health conditions

NCDs and mental health conditions are the silent killers and disruptors of modern life. Every two seconds, someone under the age of 70 dies from an NCD – including cardiovascular disease, cancer, chronic respiratory disease and diabetes – accounting for around three-quarters of non-pandemic related deaths globally. In addition, close to 1 billion people worldwide live with a mental health condition such as depression, anxiety, or psychosis. NCDs inflict daily hardship on those affected, causing most of the morbidity, including disability. An estimated 1.3 billion people – about 16% of the global population – currently experience significant disability. Globally, 1 in 3 people today are estimated to be living with a health condition that would benefit from rehabilitation.

Risk factors, such as tobacco use, physical inactivity, the harmful use of alcohol, unhealthy diets and air pollution, increase the risk of NCDs. Exposure to these risk factors often begins in childhood or early adulthood. A focus on healthy behaviors, through policies that address health determinants and reduce exposures to risk at early ages, can significantly reduce NCDs and mental health conditions.

A range of policies, health services, and other interventions are essential for fulsomely addressing NCDs and mental health conditions, which are often chronic, interlinked and require ongoing management. The continuum of quality essential health services extends from health promotion, prevention, treatment, rehabilitation, and palliative care across the life course and across all levels of care, from the community to specialized facilities. NCD-ready health systems foster coordination among health care providers, minimize disruptions to patient care, and enhance access to quality services. Further, prioritizing mental health promotion in primary healthcare (PHC) settings empowers individuals with tools, knowledge and support to enhance well-being.

Enabling the Global Response to NCDs and Mental Health

Equitable access to safe, effective, quality-assured medicines and health technology products is essential to strengthen the diagnosis, management, and treatment of NCDs and mental health conditions. Equitable access requires a robust health system with strong leadership and governance, adequate financing, access to information and evidence, quality service delivery, and a strong health workforce.¹

Health and care workers are at the crux of the global response to NCDs and mental health promotion, and the key to attaining universal health coverage. However, WHO estimates a projected shortfall of 10 million health workers by 2030, mostly in low- and lower-middle income countries.² In this context, a scale-up of NCD and mental health services will require substantial investments in education and employment of a much larger multidisciplinary health and care workforce.

Effective surveillance and monitoring of NCDs and mental health conditions allows countries to observe and monitor health patterns in populations. However, NCD and mental health surveillance activities are often inadequately prioritized and under-resourced in many countries resulting in scarce data which limits the push to action.

To address NCDs and mental health conditions, health systems must adopt a PHC, focused on health services, multisectoral collaboration, and community engagement. Addressing the surge of NCDs and mental health conditions demands quality primary care that delivers comprehensive, integrated services across the entire life course. Similarly, a PHC-oriented health system is NCD ready, providing a pathway for the prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation of NCDs and the promotion of mental health.

¹ <https://iris.who.int/bitstream/handle/10665/312288/WHO-NMH-NMA-16.194-eng.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

² Boniol M, Kunjumen T, Nair TS, Siyam A, Campbell J, Diallo K. The global health workforce stock and distribution in 2020 and 2030: a threat to equity and 'universal' health coverage?. *BMJ global health*. 2022 Jun 1;7(6):e009316.

OBJECTIVES

In preparation for the upcoming 4th High-Level Meeting on NCDs and Mental Health, this thematic dialogue will cover several dimensions of the prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation of NCDs and promotion of mental health. In particular, the discussion will:

- Underscore the current and projected burden of NCDs and mental health conditions.
- Explain the need for a PHC-oriented health system that is ready to deliver quality NCD and mental health services.
- Highlight key issues in promoting equitable access to health products and technologies.
- Assess the options for scaling up the health and care workforce to meet current and future service delivery needs in line with disease prevalence.
- Outline how to harness the power of data for results.

AGENDA

Welcome (5 min)

- **Mr. Pelle Enarsson**, Senior Advisor and Deputy Head of New York Office, UN Foundation

Opening Remarks (15 min)

- **H.E. Dr Walton A. Webson**, Permanent Representative, Permanent Mission of Antigua and Barbuda to the United Nations
- **H.E. Mr. Olivier Maes**, Permanent Representative, Permanent Mission of Luxembourg to the United Nations

Responding to the Global Burden of NCDs and Mental Health Conditions (7 min)

- **Dr. Bente Mikkelsen**, Former Director of the WHO NCDs Department

Scene Setting Remarks (25 min, ~8 min each)

- **Dr. Katherine Rouleau**, Global PHC Lead, Office of Health System Partnerships. Director, World Health Organization Collaborating Centre on Family Medicine and Primary Care
- **Mr. Prashant Yadav**, Senior Fellow for Global Health, Council on Foreign Relations
- **Dr. Lia Tadesse Gebremedhin**, Visiting Lecturer on Global Health and Population and the Executive Director of the Harvard Ministerial Executive Program, Harvard University

Moderated Discussion (35 min)

Lead discussants:

- **Mr. Rory Nefdt**, Senior Adviser, Health, UNICEF
- **Mr. James Sale**, Deputy CEO, United for Global Mental Health

Closing Reflections (5 min)

- **Mr. Werner Obermeyer**, Director, World Health Organization Office at the UN in New York

GUIDING QUESTIONS

- What are the key challenges and opportunities in improving access to NCD health products and technologies in low- and middle-income countries?
- What efforts are needed to scale up the health and care workforce to meet current and future service delivery needs in line with disease prevalence?
- How can countries better harness health data to improve delivery of NCD and mental health services?
- What is the role of multilateral cooperation in building NCD-ready health systems?

Thematic Discussions in Preparation for the 2025 High-Level Meeting on NCDs and Mental Health



December 10, 2024 | alongside UHC DAY
Investing in NCDs and Mental Health to Achieve UHC



January 21, 2025
*Prevention, Treatment, and Rehabilitation of NCDs and Promotion of
Mental Health*



February 2025
Co-morbidities & the Primary Health Care Approach



March 2025
Environmental Risk Factors for NCDs and Mental Health



April 2025
Social, Economic, and Commercial Determinants & Fiscal Measures