Call for experts:

WHO Guideline Development Groups on access to controlled medicines and on the management of pain in children 2019-2020
Issued on: 29 August 2019
Application deadline: 21 September 2019

The World Health Organization (WHO) is seeking experts to serve as members one of the two newly formed Guideline Development Groups (GDGs) that will contribute to the development of two revised and updated WHO guideline documents. One of the guideline documents will pertain to access to controlled medicines, while the other will pertain to the management of pain in children.

This “Call for experts” provides information about the WHO guideline documents to be developed, the role of GDGs at WHO, the profiles of experts currently being sought, and the application and selection processes generally. Experts may apply, and may be selected, to serve as members of only one of the two GDGs.

# Background

Controlled medicines include medicines for the management of many conditions—such as pain and palliative care, mental health disorders, and neurological diseases like epilepsy—that are subject to international regulations under the International Drug Control Conventions. The placement of medicines under international control is out of consideration of their psychoactive properties that make them susceptible to be misused, to cause dependence, and to cause harms to health.

Medicines that are placed under international control are subject to regulations that countries are required to adhere to. This includes specific administrative requirements for prescribing and dispensing as well as for import and export of medicines that are more stringent than the ones for non-controlled medicines. Reports show that the placement under international control, while reducing diversion and misuse, also hinders access to these medicines. In this respect, it is reported that about 75 % of people in the world do not have access to the controlled medicines they need for pain management and palliative care.

The 2011 WHO guidance document *“Ensuring balance in national policies on controlled substances: Guidance for availability and accessibility of controlled medicines”* was published to assist policy-makers in countries in the development and implementation of balanced policies that promote legal access to controlled medicines whilst reducing their diversion and misuse.

Pain in children is a public health concern of major significance in most parts of the world. For many children, this pain is chronic. As the leading cause of morbidity in children and adolescents in the world today, chronic disease (and its associated pain) is a major health concern. Pain lasting for longer than 3 months is defined as “chronic,” and is reported by approximately 25% of children and adolescents. The first approach to manage pain is often pharmacological.

The “*WHO* *guidelines on the pharmacological treatment of persisting pain in children with medical illnesses*” were published in 2012. These guidelines were intended for health-care providers caring for children and for policy-makers and public-health and programme managers who are crucial in facilitating legal access to – and ensuring proper use of – opioid analgesics for pain management. The revision process will take into account new scientific evidence and the current public health challenges in ensuring the availability and safe and appropriate use of medicines for the management of persistent pain and for palliative care.

As mentioned above, WHO is now seeking experts to serve as members of one of two newly formed Guidelines Development Groups (GDG) that will contribute to revise and update each of these guideline:

* **WHO Guidance on Ensuring Balanced National Policies for Equitable and Safe Access to Controlled Medicines**
* **WHO Guidelines on the Pharmacological Treatment of Persisting Pain in Children with Medical Illnesses**

# Role of the Guideline Development Groups

As part of the WHO guideline development process described in the **WHO Handbook for Guideline Development (2014)** (available at http://apps.who.int/medicinedocs/en/m/abstract/Js22083en/). The Guideline Development Groups will support WHO in:

* scoping of the guideline and priority questions that will guide the retrieval, summary and assessment of the evidence informing the recommendations;
* prioritizing important outcomes for decision-making and developing recommendations;
* examining and interpreting the evidence, with explicit consideration of the overall balance of risks and benefits as well as other factors;
* determining the strength of recommendations, taking into account benefits, harms, feasibility, acceptability, equity, human rights and resources; and,
* identifying research gaps.

The Guideline Development Groups will be expected to meet in-person at least three times at WHO Headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland, usually for 2-3 days each time. Interim teleconferences may be required of GDG members. It is likely that the selected GDG members will serve on the relevant group for a period of 1 year. The working language of the GDGs will be English.

# Who can help WHO with this important work

The Guideline Development Groups will be multidisciplinary, with members who have a range of technical knowledge, skills and experience. Two separate guideline development groups will be established. Approximately 15-20 members may be selected for each group.

To update the document *‘Ensuring balance in national policies on controlled substances: Guidance for availability and accessibility of controlled medicines’,* WHO welcomes expressions of interest from:

* Policy-makers, healthcare professionals, academics, civil society representatives, programme administration and management professionals, and healthcare regulators with expertise the following areas:
	+ Access to controlled medicines, especially in low and middle-income countries;
	+ Addiction medicine and the treatment and prevention of substance use disorders;
	+ The treatment of pain, palliative care, mental health disorders, neurological disorders and other health conditions in which controlled medicines are used;
	+ Emergency medicine and access and use of controlled medicines in humanitarian settings;
	+ Pharmaceutical programmes’ implementation and evaluation;
	+ National and international pharmaceutical policy;
	+ Pricing, procurement, needs estimation and/or regulation of medicines;
	+ Health systems and programme delivery; and/or
	+ Ethics, equity, human rights and gender in public health.

To update of the document *“WHO guidelines on the pharmacological treatment of persisting pain in children with medical illnesses”,* WHO welcomes expressions of interest from:

* **relevant technical experts** in the field of:
	+ clinical treatment of chronic pain in children, academic research on effectiveness of pharmacologic treatment of chronic pain in children, or addiction research
* **end-users** who will adopt, adapt and implement the guideline:
	+ health professionals, programme managers, policy makers, medicines regulators, health systems experts
* **representatives** of groups most affected by this guideline, for example, representatives from:
	+ parents’ groups, youth groups, cancer support groups, consumer groups
* **experts in assessing evidence** and developing guidelines informed by evidence:
	+ methodologists, epidemiologists
* **other technical experts**
	+ health economists, bioethicists, expert on equity and human rights, gender expert

# Submitting your application

To register your interest in being considered for one of the above-mentioned Guideline Development Groups, please submit your application **by 21st September 2019** through

<https://extranet.who.int/datacol/survey.asp?survey_id=4053>

The username for applicants is whoexpert. The password is whoexpert.

You will need to upload the following documents:

* A cover letter, indicating your motivation to apply and which Guideline Development Group you wish to be considered for; Your curriculum vitae;
* A completed Declaration of Interest (DOI) form for WHO Experts for the working group of interest. The required forms can be downloaded by copy-pasting the following URLs into your web browser address field:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Pharmacologic treatment of persisting pain in children | https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/pain-management-documents/doi-form-gdg-persisting-pain-in-children.docx |
| Ensuring balance in national policies on controlled substances, guidance for availability and accessibility of controlled medicines | https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/pain-management-documents/doi-form-gdg-meeting-ensuring-balance.docx |

 And,

* A Confidentiality Undertaking form for the working group of interest. The required forms can be downloaded by copy-pasting the following URLs into your web browser address field:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Pharmacologic treatment of persisting pain in children | https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/pain-management-documents/conf-undertaking-gdg-persisting-pain-in-children.docx |
| Ensuring balance in national policies on controlled substances, guidance for availability and accessibility of controlled medicines | https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/pain-management-documents/conf-undertaking-gdg-ensuring-balance-28082019.docx |

After you have submitted your interest, your application will be reviewed by WHO. Due to an expected high volume of interest, only shortlisted individuals will be informed.

# Important information about the selection processes

GDG members should have no significant conflict of interest that would impair their neutrality, independence or objectivity in the guideline development process. To this end, applicants are required to complete the WHO Declaration of Interest for WHO Experts, and the shortlisting by WHO of any individual for selection as a member of a GDG is ***inter alia*** dependent on WHO determining that there is no conflict of interest or that those conflicts that were identified can be appropriately managed (i.e. in addition to WHO’s evaluation of such individual’s experience, expertise and motivation and other criteria).

WHO will publish the names and a short biography of the shortlisted individuals on the WHO internet ahead of the first meeting of the GDG.

Appointment as a member of a GDG will furthermore be subject to an expert signing a Memorandum of Agreement (Terms and Conditions for Temporary Advisers) with WHO, addressing issues such as confidentiality, ownership and other WHO requirements.

WHO will rely on the information you provide on your cover letter and CV to assess whether you have the experience and expertise required at the appropriate level. Please ensure that you provide written evidence to support how you meet all of the relevant criteria, which are identified in the “Who can help WHO with this important work” section.

If you are shortlisted, then at any point during the application process, telephone interviews may be scheduled between you and the WHO Secretariat to ask questions relating to your experience and expertise and/or to explore whether you meet the specified qualities required for membership in the relevant GDG.

The selection of members of the GDGs will be based on the following criteria: technical expertise; experience in international and country policy work; communication skills; and ability to work constructively with people from different cultural backgrounds and orientations .The selection of GDG members will also take account of the need for diverse perspectives from different regions, especially from low and middle-income countries, and for gender balance. .

All GDG members will serve in their individual expert capacity and shall not represent any governments, any commercial industries or entities, any research, academic or civil society organizations, or any other bodies, entities, institutions or organizations. Travel and accommodation expenses of GDG members to participate in GDG meetings will be covered by WHO in accordance with its applicable policies, rules and procedures. No honoraria will be provided to any GDG members for their services or otherwise.

If you have any questions about this “Call for experts”, please write to **painmedicines@who.int** well before the applicable deadline.