

FIP YPG's Participation in the 73rd World Health Assembly of the World Health Organization

2020

Participants

Meet our virtual WHA FIP-YPG Delegates

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Introduction

On the 18th and the 19th of May, 2020 the World Health Assembly (WHA) of the World Health Organization (WHO) held for the first time in history, virtually. The WHA is the decision-making body of WHO which is usually well attended by delegations from different WHO Member States. The sessions during the WHA focus on specific health issues, and these are usually held in Geneva, Switzerland [1]

FIP YPG delegates attended the WHA as part of the FIP delegation, for the first time in 2019. In the year 2020, due to the COVID-19 the WHO took the decision to hold the WHA virtually and focus the agenda on COVID-19 and its Member States responses to the ongoing pandemic. FIP YPG members participated in the virtual sessions by listening in to the WHA livestreams on the 18th and 19th of May 2020, as well as attending a number of side events by other organizations and reporting on all events. Eight FIP YPG members (both from the Steering Committee and Subcommittee) participated in the activities this year: (1) Chinwendu Amagba- FIP YPG Sessions Proposal Working Group member; (2) Isaac Anang- FIP YPG Member Relations Working Group member; (3) Karima Bennara- FIP YPG Professional Development Team member; (4) Mercy Kanya- FIP YPG Professional Development Team member; (5) Ayodeji Matuluko- FIP YPG Chairperson of Projects; (6) Sherly Meilanti- YPG President; (7) Funmbi Okoya- FIP YPG Chairperson of Public Relations; and (8) Chidinma Omereji- FIP YPG Publications Team member.

The discussions during the main WHA events were focused on the COVID-19 pandemic. Member States expressed the importance of solidarity and interprofessional collaboration in tackling the pandemic. They also reported their progress in fighting COVID-19 and shared experiences on the evolving situation in different countries.

WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus in his speech stressed on the important role that nurses, midwives and all healthcare providers are playing in the frontlines during this pandemic, putting themselves in harm's way. He also called on all Member States to strengthen their health systems. "The world doesn't need another plan, another system, another mechanism, another committee or another organization. It needs to strengthen, implement and finance the systems and organizations it has – including WHO.", Dr. Tedros said.

Dr Tedros' full speech is available [here](#).

FIP's Contribution to the WHA

In light of the key issues related to the pandemic and the impact on health systems, especially primary healthcare, FIP ensured that the Pharmacy profession's voice is heard. FIP submitted a statement highlighting how pharmacy organisations around the world have speedily adopted new measures to ensure the continuity of care, such as home delivery of medicines or telepharmacy. FIP statement also gives focus to pharmacists' role in ensuring an effective pharmaceutical supply chain by identifying medical products at risk of shortage and implementing mitigation plans, including compounding hand sanitisers.

The full statement can be accessed here <https://bit.ly/3cCOHYH>

Overview of YPG's Participation

1. Pre-WHA: Virtual Walk the Talk: #HealthyAtHome.



Source: [WHO](#)

This year the **3rd Edition of the Walk the Talk** took place in the form of an online virtual global relay, connecting WHO Regional and Country offices around the world on **Saturday, 16 May 2020** Geneva and on **Sunday, 17 May 2020**.

Some FIP YPG WHA attendees participated in this event from home with some activities and shared their posts on social media platforms as well as joined the digital movement with the official hashtags: **#WalkTheTalk #HealthyAtHome #BeActive #HealthforAll**



2. First Day of the virtual WHA: Session 1

The session started with opening addresses from the President of the Swiss Federation, Secretary General of the United Nations (UN), Director General of the WHO and Presidents of China, France, Germany and the Republic of Korea. The speeches mainly focused on the need for further donations and support for the WHO. Also, the need for multilateral collaboration while focusing on Africa and other developing countries with weak health systems was highlighted.

3. Second Day of the virtual WHA: Session 2 and Session 3

Both sessions involved the delivery of statements from the heads of delegation, ministries of health and some WHO agencies on COVID-19 pandemic responses.

During the 73rd World Health Assembly (WHA), a resolution on the COVID-19 response, proposed by the European Union on behalf of more than 100 countries including Australia, China and Japan, was adopted. This underlines the primary responsibility of governments to adopt and implement responses to the pandemic that are specific to their national context as well as to mobilise the necessary resources to do so.

Virtual Side events after the WHA

A. WFPHA Webinar on Global Advocacy Approaches to Immunization for all ages:

In this webinar, speakers talked about mandatory vaccination for children and vaccination for COVID-19, with main points highlighting the need to vaccinate people not just for their own good, but for community protection (herd immunity).

Speakers also talked about their experiences with previous pandemics (Ebola and H1N1) and the importance of preparing ahead for pandemics, particularly the importance of learning from past epidemics.



It was also mentioned that WHO encourages collaboration in vaccine development and innovations in the ongoing development of the COVID-19 vaccine.

Impact on Pharmacists and Young Pharmacists

Pharmacists can be strong advocates in the community especially, for vaccination uptake and pharmacists/pharmaceutical scientists can be involved in vaccine development and clinical trials. We need to form strong coalitions with other health professions to pass the message across effectively

FIP YPG Advocacy during World Immunization Week 2020

During the World Immunization Week 2020, YPG held a public health campaign focused on advocacy and public health education emphasizing the key roles of pharmacists and pharmaceutical scientists in vaccination, and the importance of vaccination among the general public.

The campaign comprised of a promotional video, twitter chat, Twitter quiz and Twibbon campaign with the hashtags #FIPYPGVaccineschat and #VaccinesWorkForAll. A total reach of 154,959 with 739 posts across Twitter, Facebook and Instagram was recorded.

The link to the Twitter quiz can be found [here](#), the link to the video can be found [here](#).

B. Women in Global Health - Transforming the Global Health Workforce Through Gender Balanced Leadership

This online side event session started with opening remarks from Dr Zsuzsanna Jakab (Deputy Director-General WHO) emphasising that a large part of the health workforce is made up of women, especially nurses and midwife. She also highlighted the important work of all healthcare professionals, including pharmacists and mentioned that there will be an 18 million shortfall of healthcare workers globally by 2030. We need to also consider the gender gap; hence WHO's creation of the Gender equity hub.

Women hold 70% of healthcare jobs around the globe, hence governments need to consider how women's work can be valued and they need to be represented at all policy levels.

The session also was honoured by a speech from her Excellency, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf (WHO Goodwill Ambassador). She expressed concerns about the current pandemic and its impact on global health. She called for governments to recognise the role of female healthcare workers, ensure they are properly remunerated and that they are not engaged in unpaid work. She stressed that global health will only be strong when it is grounded in gender equity and the sacrifice of female health workers is recognised.

Dr Mwenya Kasonde spoke next about the Gender equity hub and reiterated that women make up 70% of the 200 million health workforce, but only hold 25% of senior roles. The Gender Equity Hub was established by the WHO at the 4th Global Forum on Human Resources in Health in 2017.

Jagan Chapagain from the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) emphasised on the importance of translating policy on gender equity into action. He also highlighted strategies being implemented by IFRC to ensure representation of women across senior roles, and also making sure there is gender diversity in their tools, policies, and matters relating to their staff and volunteers.

Ann Keeling closed the session reiterating the need to improve the representation of women in global health, and highlighted that only 29% of delegate leads to the WHA were women. She called for people to join the Gender Equity Hub.

Impact on Pharmacists and Young Pharmacists

More work is needed to be done in the area of gender equity in healthcare leadership and young pharmacists are encouraged by the Global Health Workforce Network (GHWN) to join the working groups of the hub. More information can be found here www.who.int/hrh/network/en/

FIP's work on Gender Equity

FIP launched the **FIPWiSE** campaign in order to help achieve gender equity for Women in Pharmaceutical Science and Education and empower them to achieve their full potential, and to attract students and young women into the fields of science or education.

Furthermore, FIP through the leading campaign '**Equity Rx**' for championing women in global pharmacy and health, focuses on three main goals: (1) promoting equity in the pharmacy workforce, (2) championing women in science and academia and (3) empowering women as informal caregivers in order to empower women both within and beyond the workforce [2].

C. UCL Fight the Fakes Instagram Live

This side event took place on Instagram via a live session. It was hosted by UCL Fight the Fakes, with speakers from the International Pharmaceutical Students Federation (IPSF) namely: Nazifa Ibrahim (Host), Hera Ali, Brian Wong and Sharleen Yajnik. The session started with an explanation of the difference between substandard and falsified medicines with chloroquine, hydroxychloroquine and paracetamol highlighted as examples of drugs likely to be falsified during the COVID-19 pandemic. The important role of pharmacists in the fight against fake medicines was highlighted.

Impact on Pharmacists and Young Pharmacists

Pharmacists need to be aware and well trained when it comes to substandard and falsified medicines because we are the first point of contact between patients and medications. We need to spread more awareness on this topic and try to be a guide to all patients, and a support to other health care providers.

FIP's work on Substandard and Falsified Medicines

FIP has been speaking out against counterfeit medicines for over 20 years. Pharmacists, pharmaceutical scientists and educators can be a vital asset in assuring the safety of patients through their active participation in the fight against these products.

FIP is involved in several international initiatives against counterfeit medicines, collaborating with a number of organisations, including: The Council of Europe's Committee of Experts, Fight the Fakes, The International Federation of Pharmaceutical Manufacturers & Associations, The US National Association of Boards of Pharmacy, The World Health Organization and The World Health Professions Alliance.

FIP has also produced tools to support its member organisations in the fight against substandard and falsified medicines at home, including congress sessions. FIP members

around the world, from Argentina and Cote d'Ivoire to Lebanon and Switzerland, have been taking part in the fight against falsified medicines in different ways. [3]

D. Youth Forum Careers in Global Health

This session was organized by the International Federation of Medical Students Association (IFMSA) using a concept of “Never have I ever” to ask panelists questions. This session gathered young and established leaders from different backgrounds and portfolios, who shared their journey and experiences in Global Health.

FIP YPG President, Sherly Meilanti, was one of the panelists and she inspired the audience when she shared her career trajectory and professional journey. The recorded video can be seen in this [link](#).

Impact on Pharmacists and Young Pharmacists

The youth were advised to utilize their advocacy skills to increase awareness on matters affecting them in global health. The panelists encouraged the audience to take on special projects, to volunteer and to cultivate value-based partnerships that are time-bound. Some panelists provided these key messages for young pharmacists to develop their career:

- It's not just about you being there, but also about building a community that respects young people and actively engages them. - Cecilia Espinoza
- Keep trying, upskill yourself and keep trying again if you are rejected. [@HauerslevMarie](#)
- If we view our work as a mission instead of career, our horizon begins to expand. I urge you all to acquire as many different experiences as you can. We need to make sure every day is a day of reflection. Each of us is an interplay of privileges and disadvantages. - [@RenzoGuinto](#)
- Stay committed to deepening your knowledge. Be creative. It is so easy to fit into the mould that's already there, so don't lose your creative tendency. - [@RoopaDhatt](#)
- Youth always brings different perspectives. Learn, be adaptive and be strategic. - [@SherlyMeilanti](#)

Global health is derived from public health and international health [4]. As part of efforts to promote public health, on 30 October 2019, FIP YPG conducted a webinar on “Advanced role of the next generation of pharmacists and pharmaceutical scientists in public health.” This webinar explored the initiatives that pharmaceutical scientists, pharmacists and students around the world are undertaking to promote public health within the local, national and

international context. This webinar aimed to support young pharmacists in their careers in public health. The recording of the webinar can be accessed by FIP YPG members through this [link](#).

Conclusion

This year's World Health Assembly was the first of its kind. Non-conventional in every sense of the word; as health ministers from over 194 countries held discussions hinged on stabilizing health care systems in the face of the COVID 19 pandemic. They also laid a backbone for highlighting interventions required to rebuild a robust system in place of the current fragility of global health. A greater involvement with the global community was observed which allowed a representation of much broader perspectives from communities at the grassroots level.

Governments and stakeholders should definitely value youth, approach them as equals, respect their views and leverage their added value to the COVID-19 response. FIP YPG's participation in the WHA is always needed for such an important event to show the impact of pharmacists and pharmaceutical scientists, especially the younger generation who are the future of the profession.

A summary of FIP YPG's participation throughout the WHA can be found in this [video](#).

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