

Recent news from WHO

- WHO published **World Health Statistics 2007** on 18 May. The report is the most complete set of health statistics from WHO's 193 Member States. This latest edition also profiles trends in 10 of the most closely-watched global health statistics and is the authoritative annual reference for set of 50 health indicators in countries worldwide. World health statistics 2007 is the official record of data produced by WHO's technical programmes and regional offices. In publishing these statistics, WHO provides the global evidence base for improvements and continued challenges in global public health. Find the report at: <http://www.who.int/healthinfo/statistics/en/>
- WHO launched a new web site on 4 May that will make it easier to search for information on clinical trials. The **Clinical Trial Search Portal** is a collaborative, international initiative led by WHO that facilitates the identification of all clinical trials, regardless of whether or not they have been published. For health-care researchers, funders, policy-makers and consumers the portal represents an enormous step towards greater access, transparency and accountability of health research globally. The portal is accessible at: <http://www.who.int/trialsearch>
- WHO and UNICEF on 3 May called on countries that procure their own **vaccines** to make sure these are purchased with vaccine vial monitors (VVM). VVMs are indicators that are printed or affixed on vials and ampoules and that become darker when exposed to heat, indicating that the vaccine may no longer be effective.
- WHO welcomed on 3 May the new **Health, Nutrition and Population Strategy** launched by the World Bank as "a major step forward in supporting poor countries to strengthen their health systems, improve the health services available to people and reduce poverty".
- WHO launched nine **patient safety** solutions on 2 May to help reduce the toll of health care-related harm that affects millions of patients worldwide. The solutions were prepared by WHO's World Alliance for Patient Safety and the WHO Collaborating Centre. Read the solutions at: <http://www.jointcommissioninternational.org/24839/>
- WHO released a report on **Youth and Road Safety**, which shows that road crashes are the biggest killer of young people between the ages of 10 and 24. Read the report at: <http://www.who.int/roadsafety/week/activities/global/youth/declaration/en/index.html>
- WHO and key partners met, on 19 and 20 April, to show commitment to combating **neglected tropical diseases**.
- About 700 000 more people in low- and middle-income countries received **treatment for HIV/AIDS** in 2006, according to a report released on 17 April. The number of people receiving antiretroviral treatment grew to 2 million in December 2006, which means that 28% of people in need of treatment received it, according to the report produced by WHO, UNAIDS and UNICEF. The report also focuses on other priority health sector interventions such as prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV (PMTCT). In 2005, only about 220 000 of the more than 2 million pregnant women estimated to be living with HIV received antiretroviral prophylaxis for PMTCT, representing an estimated coverage rate of 11%. The report entitled, *Towards universal access: scaling up priority HIV/AIDS interventions in the health sector*, can be found at: http://www.who.int/hiv/mediacentre/universal_access_progress_report_en.pdf
- TDR, the Special Programme for Research and Training in Tropical Diseases, announced a new, web database developed by an international network to help identify and prioritize **drug targets** against diseases that predominantly affect developing countries. More information is available at: www.who.int/tdr
- WHO launched a major online project, on 16 April, to revise the global standard for medical and health statistics: the **International Classification of Diseases (ICD)**. For the first time, WHO is inviting stakeholders to participate in the ICD revision through an Internet platform. This update is vital to keep up with recent progress in medicine and the use of information technology in the field of health, and to improve the basis for international comparisons. The last version of ICD was adopted in 1990 by WHO Member States, which use it as a standard to report diseases and deaths.

News from the World Health Assembly

More than 2400 people from WHO's 193 Member States, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and other observers attended the **World Health Assembly**, the supreme decision-making body of the World Health Organization (WHO), which took place in Geneva from 14 to 23 May. A number of key decisions were made.

- The Assembly approved a budget for 2008–2009 of US\$ 4.2 billion, an increase of nearly US\$ 1 billion from the US\$ 3.3 billion approved for 2006–2007.
- The Assembly passed a resolution on pandemic influenza preparedness calling on WHO to establish an international stockpile of vaccines for H5N1 or other influenza viruses of pandemic potential, and to formulate guidelines to ensure equitable distribution of pandemic-influenza vaccines at affordable prices in the event of a pandemic.
- A resolution on public health, innovation and intellectual property calls for a global strategy and plan of action in this area.
- A resolution to intensify access to affordable, safe and effective combination treatments for **malaria**.
- A resolution urged Member States to develop and implement long-term plans for **tuberculosis** prevention and control.
- Indigenous **polio** survives in parts of only four countries. Member States resolved to step up their efforts to eradicate the virus.
- A resolution was passed on **integrating gender** analysis and actions into WHO's work.
- The Assembly adopted a resolution expressing concern over the continuous deterioration of the health and economic conditions of the populations in the **occupied Palestinian territory**.
- A resolution on **better medicines for children** called on Director-General Dr Margaret Chan to undertake a programme of work to improve access to essential medicines for children. This year, WHO will develop a Model List of Essential Medicines for Children.
- In a resolution on **health technologies**, in particular medical devices, the Assembly urged Member States to draw up national guidelines and plans for the assessment, procurement and management of technologies used in health care.
- A resolution on **rational use of medicines** promotes an integrated, health systems approach to promoting more appropriate use of medicines, specifically, national multidisciplinary bodies to monitor medicines use and promote rational use.
- The Assembly agreed that a comprehensive review of all research undertaken on the **variola virus**, which causes smallpox, be undertaken beginning in 2010.
- A resolution urges WHO to provide advice and technical support for oral health programmes at country, regional and global levels, in collaboration with other United Nations organizations, WHO collaborating centres and NGOs.
- The WHA passed a resolution urging Member States and the Secretariat to increase investment in, and strengthen efforts towards **health promotion** as the cornerstone of primary health care and a core function of public health.
- A resolution on **emergency trauma care systems** draws the attention of governments to the need to strengthen pre-hospital and emergency trauma care systems (including mass casualty management efforts) and describes steps governments could take.
- Member States approved a resolution on strengthening **health information systems** and enhancing WHO's work on health statistics in general.
- Member States passed a resolution on a coherent **research strategy** for WHO, which will help to disseminate the outcomes of research and its utilization in decision- and policy-making for more effective health policies.
- Member States approved a resolution on the control of **leishmaniasis**.
- The Assembly endorsed the **Global Plan of Action on Workers' Health**, which aims to devise policy instruments on workers' health.
- A progress report to the Assembly describes **noncommunicable disease** activities in advocacy, surveillance and population-based prevention since the year 2000.
- The Assembly held lengthy discussions on public-health problems caused by the harmful use of **alcohol**. Delegates agreed that the issue will be discussed again at the WHO Executive Board in January, 2008.

For more about these and other WHO news items please see: <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/events/2007/en/index.html>