



NEWS RELEASE

Experts call on leaders to tackle inequalities preventing poor communities from living healthy lives

Global health experts at the [Fifth Global Symposium on Health Systems Research \(HSR2018\) in Liverpool](#) will call on governments and international agencies to tackle the inequalities that prevent poorer communities from living healthy lives. This means addressing the lack of access to quality health services, education, clean water and environment, public safety, and fair legal systems.

This is as true for people living in more affluent countries just as it is for those in poorer nations. In England, the life expectancy gap between richest and poorest neighbourhoods has widened since the beginning of the century. [A boy born in one of the most affluent areas will outlive one born in one of the poorest by 8.4 years](#), an increase of 7.2 years since 2001 (LSP, 2018).

Confirmed speakers include:

- Alistair Burt, Minister, UK Department for International Development (DFID)
- Soumya Swaminathan, Deputy Director General of Programmes, World Health Organization (WHO)
- Taher Qassim, Liverpool Arabic Centre
- Manmeet Kaur, City Health Works
- Githinji Gitahi, CEO AMREF Health Africa and co-chair UHC2030 WHO and World Bank Initiative

Despite phenomenal increases in global wealth – up by an estimated [66 per cent over the last two decades \(from USD\\$690tn to USD\\$1,143tn\)](#) – globally, the poor are more vulnerable to chronic illnesses such as diabetes, and at high risk to infectious diseases like cholera or diarrhoea, especially in a humanitarian crisis.

People living in poverty are more likely to be in low paid jobs, [living in poor and overcrowded conditions and facing food insecurity](#). Women and girls in particular are disproportionately affected by sexual abuse and violence. These vulnerabilities result in being more susceptible to illness and having minimal family support, time or money to manage them. The cost of health care is contributing more than ever to [personal debt](#) and poverty.

Addressing these inequalities is critical to meeting the vision of ‘Health for All’ that was set out in the Alma Ata declaration that marks its fortieth anniversary this year. The anniversary marks a renewed energy amongst the global community to achieve universal health coverage by 2030.

Dr Kabir Sheikh, Chair of Health Systems Global, co-sponsor of the Symposium, said:

“Global and national leaders must recognise that tackling our major health challenges is about more than just treating people when they are sick. It means addressing persistent inequalities that put the most vulnerable at risk of poor health. It means tackling pollution, supporting refugees, educating children, promoting gender equity and building and maintaining public infrastructure. It means ensuring that all people have social protections, so that they don’t have to make difficult choices between health care and other basic needs”.

“We urgently need platforms for common people to have a say in planning for their own health. Without investment in research to support such system improvements, it will be tough for us to achieve the sustainable development goals”.

Professor Sally Theobald, Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine (LSTM) and representative on the Symposium Executive Committee, said:

“HSR2018 is a critical milestone in the global movement to achieve universal health coverage. Set between the high level UN General Assembly in September and [Primary Healthcare Conference](#) at the end of October, there is no better time to bring together these debates in Liverpool”.

“Liverpool’s rich history highlights its notable position as a pioneer in the public health movement, making it the perfect location for the 2018 Symposium. Yet, Liverpool is still the [most deprived local authority district in England](#), and has some of the greatest health inequalities in the UK, so it can truly speak to the challenges at the heart of the Symposium.”

The Symposium will take place between 8 and 12 October in Liverpool, ACC Conference Centre, and is [hosted by Health Systems Global with co-sponsors](#) the Alliance for Health Policy and Systems Research, World Health Organization (WHO) and a consortium of UK organisations led by the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine.

ENDS.

For further information on the Symposium or to request an interview with Dr Kabir Sheikh (chair, HSG) or Professor Asha George (vice-chair, HSG) , please contact Vivienne Benson v.benson@ids.ac.uk +44(0)7789013453

Notes to Editors

- You can [review the full Symposium program](#) on [the website](#), or download the [event app which will enable you to connect](#) with key participants
- Universal health coverage means that all individuals and communities receive the health services they need without suffering financial hardship. It includes the full spectrum of essential, quality health services, from health promotion to prevention, treatment, rehabilitation, and palliative care. (WHO, 2017)
- The Alma-Ata Declaration in 1978 was the first to make primary health care the main strategy to achieve the World Health Organization’s goal of health for all. The Declaration 2.0 to be discussed in October is

expected to renew the emphasis on primary care as the main driver of people-centred health systems leading to UHC. (The Lancet, 2018)

- On September 25th 2015, countries adopted a set of goals to end poverty, the sustainable development goals, to protect the planet and ensure prosperity for all. Each goal has specific targets to be achieved by 2030. (UN, 2015)
- On 25-26 October 2018, the world will come together in Astana, Kazakhstan, at the [Global Conference on Primary Health Care](#) to renew a commitment to primary health care to achieve universal health coverage and the Sustainable Development Goals. The Conference will be held at the Palace of Independence and is co-hosted by the Government of Kazakhstan, WHO and UNICEF.
- A health system is the people, institutions and resources, arranged together in accordance with established policies, to improve the health of a population.
- What is HSR2018? [Health Systems Global](#) organizes a symposium every two years to bring together its members with the broad range of players involved in health systems and policy research. The focus of the Fifth Global Symposium on Health Systems Research (HSR2018) in Liverpool between 8-12 October is on advancing health systems for all in the sustainable development goals (SDGs) era.
- 2018 the fortieth anniversary of the Alma Ata declaration. The Alma Ata vision of 'Health for All' remains as compelling today as it was in 1978, but the world has changed. Despite many improvements, there remain extraordinary challenges for health equity and social inclusion, such as demographic and disease transitions, conflicts and the mass migration of people, pluralistic health systems and markets, and climate change.
- [Health Systems Global \(HSG\)](#) is the first international membership-based organization fully dedicated to promoting health systems research and knowledge translation. It is driven by a diverse, global membership of researchers, decision-makers and
- Useful resources:
 - Longevity Science Panel (2018), 'Life expectancy: Is the socioeconomic gap narrowing?': https://www.longevitypanel.co.uk/files/LSP_Report.pdf
 - World Bank (2018), 'World Bank Report Finds Rise in Global Wealth, but Inequality Persists – Press Release': <http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2018/01/30/world-bank-report-finds-rise-in-global-wealth-but-inequality-persists>
 - World Health Organization (2018), <http://www.who.int/hia/housing/en/>