Global Neurology at the forefront of Global Public Health: the World Health Organization resolution on epilepsy and other neurological disorders

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On November 12th, the World Health Assembly (WHA), the decision-making body of the World Health Organization (WHO), passed Resolution WHA73.10 for 'global actions on epilepsy and other neurological disorders', which encourages Member States to provide an 'integrated (multisectoral) response to epilepsy and other neurological disorders'.[1] This is a landmark for brain health, and specifically global neurology, that recognises the growing burden of neurological disorders, which are the leading cause of disability and the second leading cause of mortality worldwide.[2,3]

The resolution was initiated by the Russian Federation and supported and co-sponsored by many Member States across all WHO regions. The development of the resolution was also advocated for and championed by many patient and professional associations, such as the International League Against Epilepsy, International Bureau for Epilepsy, World Federation of Neurology and European Federation of Neurological Associations.

The WHO calls upon its Member States to support the development of an Intersectoral Global Action Plan on Epilepsy and Other Neurological Disorders, including maternal and neonatal/child health, communicable and non-communicable disease management and prevention, and care for the elderly. Due to rapid ageing of the population, climate change and urbanization, especially in low-income and middle-income countries (LMICs), incidences of both endemic neurological infections like encephalitis and non-communicable diseases, including epilepsy, stroke, dementia and traumatic brain injury, are on the rise and environmental risk factors such as air pollution are of great concern. Furthermore, healthcare systems in many LMICs lack the neurological workforce, infrastructure and policies to accommodate a growing number of neurological patients.[4] Supporting a collaborative global public health effort to strengthen healthcare systems, especially by enabling access to essential diagnostics and medicines, as well as universal health coverage and creating

leadership that enforces policies with a human rights-based approach, Resolution WHA73.10 aims to achieve health equity both within and between LMICs and high-income countries (HICs).[1]

The WHO resolution highlights the need for evidence-based actions and urges the global community to conduct intersectoral research to improve prevention and diagnosis of neurological disorders, as well as treatment and rehabilitation of patients via appropriate and innovative platforms.[1] The Global COVID-19 Neuro Research Coalition, created in response to the present pandemic, represents one of the few research platforms for global neurology.[5] With membership representing >50 institutions worldwide and working in close collaboration with the WHO Brain Health Unit, it will be an asset throughout the development of the WHO Global Action Plan and beyond. Our coalition is prepared to answer the WHO's call to support evidence-based decision making and research-driven progress beyond the COVID-19 pandemic.

Spurred by the COVID-19 pandemic and WHO Resolution WHA73.10, our coalition strongly encourages and supports multinational neuroscience research collaboration and welcomes help from other like-minded brain health initiatives. While such collaboration is urgently needed and especially timely in a pandemic, this current challenge might ultimately serve to catalyse a global effort to improve outcomes and quality of life for people affected by neurological disorders around the world, especially in LMICs.

If you are interested in joining, please contact covid19.neuro@med.tum.de

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