



MILESTONE ADOPTION OF MEDICAL OXYGEN RESOLUTION AND LAUNCH OF NEW GLOBAL OXYGEN ALLIANCE AT WORLD HEALTH ASSEMBLY

26 May 2023

The **Lancet Global Health Commission on Medical Oxygen Security** applauds the 194 Member States of the World Health Organization (WHO) gathered at the 76th World Health Assembly for their historic adoption of the first **resolution** dedicated to increasing access to medical oxygen.

The Commission also welcomes the launch of a new **Global Oxygen Alliance (GO2AL)** to continue the vital work of the **ACT-A Accelerator Oxygen Emergency Taskforce**, which has helped more than 100 low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) respond to the massive increase in demand for medical oxygen during the pandemic.

Better access to medical oxygen could have reduced COVID-19's devastating death toll - an estimated **20 million**. Inadequate supplies of medical oxygen and respiratory therapies, and the workforce needed to install, operate, and maintain the lifesaving equipment, were a defining inequity of the pandemic. A **study** of COVID-19 deaths in 64 intensive care units across ten African countries showed that one in two patients died without receiving medical oxygen.

Full implementation of the new WHO oxygen resolution will not only improve national pandemic preparedness and response efforts, but will also enable countries to accelerate progress on most of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for health, as oxygen is vital for managing many infectious and chronic conditions and essential for safe surgery.

The **Global Burden of Disease** estimates that non-COVID conditions requiring oxygen cause almost 25 million deaths each year, including nine million from heart disease, four million from injuries, four million from lower respiratory infections and tuberculosis, three million from COPD, two million from lung cancer, and two million from neonatal disorders.

To inform and accelerate the development of health systems that can provide medical oxygen to every patient who needs it now, and in the likely event of another respiratory pandemic, The Lancet Global Health Oxygen Commission was **announced** in September 2022.

The Commission plans to report in 2024 on four major issues including, (1) how to define and measure the need for medical oxygen, (2) how to define and measure oxygen access, (3) how to plan the right

mix of oxygen solutions and personnel for different national health systems, and (4) how to secure the financing and political support to deliver transformational change. These themes will be applied across four cross-cutting pillars addressing all levels of health care, patient populations, relevant indications for oxygen therapy, and various health systems issues.

The Commission looks forward to collaborating closely with WHO Member States and the GO₂AL to inform and strengthen the implementation of the 31 actions outlined in the WHO resolution, and appeals to all stakeholders to play a role in the historic effort to ensure that no patient ever again dies for lack of access to medical oxygen.

The Lancet Global Health Commission on Medical Oxygen Security is led by 20 Commissioners and guided by a team of 40 Advisors and an Executive Committee including co-hosting organizations — Makerere University in Uganda, icddr,b in Bangladesh, and the University of Melbourne and the Murdoch Children's Research Institute in Australia — with support from the Every Breath Counts Coalition. To ensure wide input to the work of the Commission, a global network of Oxygen Access Collaborators - open to all - meets monthly.

For a list of Oxygen Commissioners and Advisors, click [here](#).

Contacts: Executive Committee

Dr Freddy Kitutu, Makerere University, Uganda, kitutufred@gmail.com

Dr Ahmed Ehsanur Rahman, icddr,b Bangladesh, ehsanur@icddr.org

Dr Carina King, Karolinska Institutet, Sweden, carina.king@ki.se

Dr Hamish Graham, University of Melbourne and Murdoch Children's Research Institute, Australia, hamish.graham@rch.org.au

Zoë Mullan, Lancet Global Health, UK, zoe.mullan@lancet.com

Leith Greenslade, Every Breath Counts, USA, leith@justactions.org



QUOTES FROM LANCET GLOBAL HEALTH OXYGEN COMMISSIONERS ON THE ADOPTION OF THE WHO OXYGEN RESOLUTION

(Alphabetical by surname)

"Access to medical oxygen has become a measure of equity in healthcare, today. We must collaborate efficiently and effectively, to ensure this basic human right for all."

Masooma Aqeel, Aga Khan University Hospital, Pakistan

"The World Health Assembly resolution confirms support from across the globe for essential actions to improve access to medical oxygen. This is a major milestone and a key starting point for global action to tackle this challenge and reduce avoidable respiratory deaths, improve respiratory health and increase global preparedness to meet future challenges such as those due to climate change and pandemics."

Harry Campbell, University of Edinburgh, Scotland

"Vivement cette résolution, qui, nous l'espérons, boostera l'élan vers l'accès universel à l'oxygène médical."
(I look forward to this resolution, which we hope will boost the momentum towards universal access to medical oxygen)

Fatoumata Dicko, University of Sciences, Techniques and Technologies of Bamako, Mali

"The WHO Resolution on Increasing Access to Medical Oxygen at the World Health Assembly in Geneva, is surely a watershed in the treatment of hypoxaemia (low blood oxygen). This is because it will definitely translate to impactful reduction of mortality."

AG Falade, Ibadan University, Nigeria

"Although the lack of medical oxygen has always been a problem, it took the Covid pandemic to bring this into sharp focus for both the medical community and policymakers. We cannot afford to lose the momentum gained in ensuring no one dies in any country because of lack of access to this life saving and essential intervention."

Ramanan Laxminarayan, One Health Trust and Oxygen for India, India

"The [WHO] resolution is an important step toward affirming oxygen's essential roles in across the healthcare system and can hopefully serve as a catalyst to sustain interest, investment and progress toward improving global health equity."

Michael Lipnick, University of California, San Francisco, United States

"The resolution is important to ensure we always have medical oxygen available to all who need it, down to primary care facilities. Health workers in low resource settings for long have been forced to play God, rationing use of scarce supplies of oxygen for the numerous patients in need. Let us unite to stop this moral injury, and reduce preventable deaths."

Jacquie Oliwa, KEMRI-Welcome, Kenya

"Breathing is living! Access to medical oxygen not only saves people's lives but helps people to lead healthier and more productive lives. It is essential to building a healthier world."

Menaldi Rasmin, Universitas Indonesia, Indonesia

"This landmark resolution is a breath of life!"

Stefan Swartling Peterson, Karolinska Institutet, Sweden

"Medical oxygen is an invaluable, essential, and irreplaceable component of health care that has the power to turn blue to pink and restore life. The WHO oxygen resolution will assure this cross-cutting life saving therapy is available for newborns, children, pregnant women, patients with chronic illness and acute conditions including trauma, infections and for routine surgery and anesthesia."

Rediet Shimeles Workneh, Gadian Health Systems, Ethiopia

"This resolution is really important to strengthen global access to oxygen for all children and adults who need it. In low and middle income countries, children with pneumonia die every day from lack of access to oxygen – this resolution will help to change such global inequity."

Heather Zar, University of Cape Town, South Africa