

Resolution on Sepsis by the World Health Assembly Means Quantum Leap in the Fight Against Sepsis

GSA Executive Summary



May 2017

On the unanimous recommendation of the Executive Board of the WHO, the Seventieth World Health Assembly adopted the resolution "[Improving the Prevention, Diagnosis, and Management of Sepsis](#)" during its annual General Assembly meeting in Geneva (May 22-31, 2017). The resolution represents a major achievement for the [Global Sepsis Alliance](#) (GSA) in working to achieve its vision of "A World Free of Sepsis".

Background

In collaboration with the GSA, the resolution was proposed by the German Ministry of Health and supported by Australia, Austria, Colombia, Costa Rica, Estonia, Ireland, Jamaica, Japan, Luxemburg, the Russian Federation, and Switzerland. The resolution highlights poor recognition of sepsis as a major global health issue resulting in millions of preventable deaths each year. With the exception of maternal and neonatal sepsis, sepsis does not feature in the Global Burden of Disease statistics and is thus not afforded priority by policy makers or health care authorities. In addition, it is mostly unknown and poorly understood by the public. Further preventable deaths occur as many healthcare professionals lack training and expertise in the prevention, early recognition, and evidence based management of sepsis as a true time-critical medical emergency.

In most low and middle income countries, an integrated approach to managing sepsis through clinical and laboratory services and timely access to appropriate sepsis care is very limited or absent. In high income countries, effective best practice approaches to the early recognition and management of sepsis are often poorly implemented.

The resolution addresses many goals and targets the GSA and the [World Sepsis Day](#) Movement set out in the [World Sepsis Declaration](#) in 2012. The resolution urges the 194 UN Member States to implement appropriate measures to reduce the human and health economic burden of sepsis. In the USA, sepsis causes or contributes to half of all deaths in hospitals and has become the leading cause of annual hospitals costs, at 22.4 billion USD per year.

10 Key Messages and Requests of the WHO / WHA Resolution on Sepsis

1. Each year, sepsis causes approximately six million deaths worldwide, most of which are preventable.
2. Sepsis is a syndromic response to infection and the final common pathway to death from most infectious diseases.
3. Sepsis represents the most vital indication for the responsible use of effective antimicrobials for human health.

4. The UN Member States urgently need to implement and promote measures for prevention; such as clean childbirth practices, infection prevention practices in surgery, improvements in sanitation, nutrition and delivery of clean water.
5. Many vaccine-preventable diseases are a major contributor to sepsis in children and adults; national immunization programmes are needed urgently.
6. Sepsis is an emergency that requires time-critical actions, improved training of health care professionals and laypeople.
7. UN Member States are required to promote research aimed at innovative means of diagnosing and treating sepsis across all ages, including research for new antimicrobial and other novel medicines/interventions, rapid diagnostic tests, and vaccines.
8. Public awareness needs to be raised and encouraged, for example by using the term 'sepsis' when communicating with patients, relatives, and other parties, or by supporting World Sepsis Day, every year on September 13.
9. Integrated approaches to the prevention and clinical management of sepsis are urgently needed, including access to appropriate health care for survivors.
10. The International Classification of Diseases (ICD) system needs to be applied and improved to establish the prevalence and profile of sepsis and the development of specific epidemiologic surveillance systems.

The resolution also requests the Director-General of the WHO to draw attention to the public health impact of sepsis and publish a report on sepsis and its global consequences by the end of 2018, support the Member States adequately, collaborate with other UN organizations, and report to the 2020 WHA on the implementation of this resolution. In support of this resolution, the WHO has allocated about 4.6 million US Dollar to foster its implementation.

Next Steps – WHO / GSA Task Force

Key representatives of WHO have already agreed to establish a Task Force with the GSA to develop the most appropriate strategy to prioritize and foster the timely implementation of the key requests of this resolution and to secure the necessary political and financial support on the national and international level for this essential and life-saving work.

The GSA identifies key priorities as: (i) achieving adequate documentation of sepsis in the global and national disease statistics and reports, (ii) encourage the development of national action plans for sepsis, (iii) fostering quality improvement initiatives on all levels of care and for all health care settings (iv) collaborating with governmental and nongovernmental institutions and bodies that are focused on strengthening health systems and improving patient safety.