

Summary of Wellcome Trust comments on IGWG Draft Global Strategy and Plan of Action on public health, innovation and intellectual property

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The Wellcome Trust would like to highlight four priority issues that the IGWG strategy and plan of action urgently needs to address. We believe that attention to these issues will help achieve a number of the IGWG objectives.

1. Sustainable funding for product development public private partnerships (PDPs)

The strategy and plan of action needs to include long-term commitments from national and multilateral donors to increase funding for PDPs. The PDP model has proven very effective at combining the strengths of R&D capacity in the public and private sectors, in the North and the South.¹ A strong array of PDPs will be one of the best ways of taking forward the development of new products for low income markets. However, there is now a real deficit in funding for the PDPs, and with about half of PDP funding coming from just one source (the Gates Foundation), there is an urgent need to diversify their funding base.

2. Coordination and increased funding for health research capacity strengthening

Donors and research institutions in the South and North should coordinate their efforts to strengthen health research capacity in the South. Research institutions in the South must develop their own capacity strengthening priorities – a process which may require initial outside funding – and must have the ability to negotiate with donors and research institutions in the North to get appropriate support. The strategy and plan of action should establish a forum to convene donors and research institutions to take this forward. It could be modelled on the newly established International Health Partnership, which will coordinate donor support for health services in developing countries.

3. Global priority setting on R&D needs for neglected health products and sharing of information on who is filling those needs

The WHO should convene health experts from the South and North to prioritise health problems of developing countries that are in need of better technical solutions. The 14 conditions identified in the draft strategy are a good starting point, but the prioritisation of health problems must be explicitly evidence-based and able to change according to global needs. The WHO should engage public and private sponsors of R&D to share progress on meeting R&D needs related to the priority health problems. Sharing experience in this way will help sponsors identify and fill unmet R&D needs.

4. Management of publicly funded IP to promote its application to developing country needs

Universities and public research institutes, with encouragement from research funders, must make IP management decisions with a view to maximising opportunities for the inventions to be used to benefit poor populations in developing countries. When licensing IP to commercial partners, this may mean including terms that preserve access to the technologies to address needs of developing countries, particularly if the primary licensee does not intend to serve those markets. The IGWG strategy should encourage these practices.

¹ As demonstrated in Mary Moran et. al. (2005) "The New Landscape of Neglected Disease Drug Development" <http://www.wellcome.ac.uk/assets/wtx026592.pdf>