

# Developing Health Policies at the International Level

As health threats become more global and countries find themselves tackling very similar health problems, there is a growing collaboration at the international level to develop and implement health policies that will help resolve the issues faced by health systems around the world.

Many of these policies have a direct impact on the availability and the access to medical technologies. It is for this reason that MedTech Europe remains engaged together with other medical technology associations and in particular with the Global Medical Technology Alliance (GMTA) and the Global Diagnostics Alliance (GDA) as a stakeholder in the setting and implementation of health policies at the global level.



## Anti-Microbial Resistance

Anti-microbial resistance is currently spreading across the world, knowing no borders and reaching all corners of the planet. In order to combat the spread of the superbugs, infectious agents which are resistant to most antibiotics, medical technologies are essential in providing support in infection control but also in rapidly and adequately diagnosing the patients so that they are treated only with those antibiotics which will be effective.

## World Health Assembly

The World Health Assembly remains the main forum for elaborating and promoting health policies at the international level. It touches on many policies but of particular interest to the medical device and in vitro diagnostics sectors are the policies around access to innovative technologies, financing and cooperation in research and development, and the global initiative on public health innovation and intellectual property.

## Private Organizations for Patient Safety (POPS) injection safety

Injection safety is seen as a major drive to protect both patients and healthcare professionals from the inherent risks present when using needles and other injectable systems. The medical technology sector is essential in providing sustainable solutions that minimize the risks both at the time of use and disposal, and which put in place injectable systems which can only be used once - thus preventing the transmission of disease through health systems.

## Emergency response

In recent years, outbreaks requiring a coordinated emergency response such as the 2014-2016 West Africa Ebola outbreak and the more recent Zika outbreak have highlighted the need for a coordinated response to be able to effectively tackle them. The development of and deployment of suitable medical technologies is important in order to rapidly diagnose and treat patients and to protect healthcare professionals who may be exposed to these life-threatening diseases.

## Tackling non-communicable diseases

Health policies when dealing with non-communicable diseases at the international level have in the past focused strongly on prevention, and prevention remains one of the main areas of focus. However there is a clear realization that in spite of all the prevention initiatives there will still be millions of patients around the world which suffer from diseases such as diabetes, cancer or heart disease. Availability and access to medical technologies then becomes a key factor in effectively managing those patients with non-communicable diseases.

## China - Health system reform

An ambitious plan is underway to reform the health system in China which will likely be seen as a model in other emerging economies. To address shortages, the Chinese Health System is opening up to the development and use of private hospitals, as part of an overall initiative to increase hospital capacity in China. A strong emphasis on standardization of health services and better training of health professionals is another key pillar of this initiative. When it comes to medical devices, tighter controls on their use and an emphasis on locally sourced devices are questions to be followed with concern.

## Research and Development (R&D) policy

Setting priorities in research and development in the public sector remains a challenge when faced with limited resources and diverging priorities. Stronger collaboration in R&D within the healthcare field and the prioritization of research into finding solutions for the healthcare challenges are key aspects of collaborations which are pushed forward both by global policy setters such as WHO and key funders of R&D such as the Gates Foundation.