

Open letter calls on governments to wake up and invest in NCDs

Language English

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Published in Foresight Global Health magazine, an open letter signed by NCD Alliance President Mr Todd Harper, WHO Director-General Dr Tedros Ghebreyesus, UNICEF Executive Director Ms Henrietta Fore, and Minister of International Development for Norway Mr Dag-Inge Ulstein challenges governments to face the hard lessons learned through COVID-19 and seize the moment to build back better, ensuring that everyone has equal access to the health care they need.

The pandemic has highlighted the inadequacies of health systems globally, many of which are due to underinvestment in noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) over many years. Around the world, high percentages of people hospitalised for COVID-19 also live with NCDs such as diabetes, hypertension and cardiovascular disease.

As a consequence of health systems being overloaded, people living with NCDs are not getting the care they need, which will result in a longer-term upsurge in deaths. For example, in the Netherlands, the number of people newly diagnosed with cancer dropped by 25%, due to difficulties in accessing the necessary doctors and analyses.

This harsh reality has come to light through the COVID-19 pandemic, and the open letter calls on governments everywhere to create a new and fairer normal that is based on health equity and equality, and to make the much-needed investment to put a brake on the NCD epidemic. This investment may be costly, but continued discrimination in access to health care and neglect of NCDs will cost far more.

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