

WHO Health Innovation Group (WHIG)

What is the WHIG?

WHIG is a voluntary group of interested WHO colleagues who jointly promote and pursue health innovation within the Organization. The group also strives to promote WHO's image and position on health innovation to the outside world. WHIG is open to all WHO staff and it offers an open forum on health innovation.

How does WHIG define health innovation?

Keeping in view WHO's vision, mandate and its leadership priorities that are enshrined in the 12th General Program Work (2014-2019), the group has adopted a comprehensive working definition of health innovation as follows:

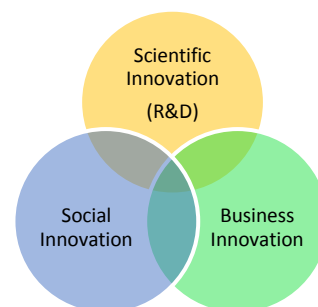
Health innovation is to identify new or improved health policies, systems, products and technologies, and services and delivery methods that improve people's health and well-being.

- *Health innovation responds to unmet public health needs by employing new ways of thinking and working with a special focus on the needs of vulnerable populations;*
- *Health innovation aims to add value in the form of improved efficiency, effectiveness, quality, sustainability, safety and/or affordability;*
- *Health innovation can be preventive, promotive, palliative, curative, rehabilitative and/or assistive care;*
- *WHO engages in health innovation to achieve universal health coverage within the context of the Sustainable Development Goals.*

It is important, however, to emphasize that the group does not see health innovation limited to only product development.

Our approach to health innovation

Strengthening of health systems requires ever evolving policies which translate into improved development and delivery of health services and technologies. Needs-based innovation catalyses this process. Discovery, development and delivery of health products and services are integral components of a holistic approach to health innovation. Business innovation is also critical for finding and scaling up financially sustainable solutions. It may involve initiatives to address market failures of various kinds and build new, synergistic partnerships employing open access policies. Our approach to health innovation is hence holistic and builds on the notion of 'integrated innovation', which is the "coordinated application of scientific/technological,



social and business innovation to develop solutions to complex challenges.¹ We have adopted a holistic, integrative approach to health innovation in that we recognize the potential synergies that can arise from linking complementary areas of innovation (scientific/technological, social and business innovation). We recognize that innovations can be developed anywhere and we appreciate the potential for global innovation to flow from “south-to-north” as well.

What does WHIG do?

The group meet at least once a month and discuss various aspects of and developments in the world of health innovation and brainstorm and plan actions to promote health innovation at WHO. Any interested WHO colleague can participate in the meetings. A core group, two co-leads, and a technical officer have ensured continuity and institutional memory.

To promote health innovation in and through WHO, the group attempts to plan and execute actions that are feasible. Examples include identifying health innovation within the work of WHO and collating it (mapping innovation); inviting teams in WHO to present their innovative work to a broader audience (fostering innovation); strategically identifying health innovation examples for supporting and scaling them (encouraging innovation), having thought leaders speak at WHO on their work on health innovation (discussing innovation); conducting meetings of various kinds on health innovation (convening on innovation); seeking collaborations within and outside the UN system on health innovation (collaborating on innovation); and writing on various aspects and examples of health innovation.

The group is open to consider any innovative and feasible ideas to promote innovation at WHO.

How WHIG came into being

On behest of ADG-HIS and ADG-FWC, some of us produced a paper on *Promoting Innovation at WHO: Ideas for Action* which was discussed with the ADGs and with their guidance and support the WHO Health Innovation Group came into being. The group adopted a voluntary, flexible and incremental approach in its work.

Be innovative! Join the effort.

WHIG is an inclusive initiative. If you want to join the group and/or need to know more about it, please contact:

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¹ Grand Challenges Canada: <http://www.grandchallenges.ca/integrated-innovation/>