

GLOBAL ALLIANCE OF MEDICAL EXCELLENCE

Declaration by Future Doctors of the Global Alliance of Medical Excellence

21 September, 2021

Delegates to the 76th United Nations General Assembly

We, the future doctors of the world, are calling upon leaders of nations gathered at the 76th United Nations (UN) General Assembly to invest now in a COVID-19 Emergency Oxygen Response.

It has become strikingly clear that too many low-and-middle-income countries do not have the necessary medical oxygen resources needed to address the COVID-19 pandemic. Healthcare workers around the world are being forced to make heart-breaking decisions about which patients can and cannot receive medical oxygen; many hundreds of thousands have died simply from lack of access to this life-saving treatment.

Over 60 low-and-middle-income countries currently require 18,000,000 cubic metres of oxygen every day - the equivalent of 2.6 million large cylinders - just to treat patients suffering with COVID-19. This pandemic has tragically exposed the consequences of decades of underinvestment in access to medical oxygen on a massive scale. COVID-19 has already killed 4.3 million people with many reports that lack of access to oxygen has been a cause of many deaths. This is on top of the annual 2.5 million deaths from other causes of pneumonia, many among newborns and children, not to mention the burden of malaria, sepsis and chronic conditions like COPD where oxygen is a critical life-saving medicine.

The delayed response to addressing the oxygen access gap with adequate supplies of fit-for-purpose oxygen and the trained healthcare workers and biomedical engineers needed to operate and maintain the equipment, is an avoidable tragedy for each and every hospital that is being forced to ration oxygen, to their patients gasping for air, and to the families struggling to get the best care for their loved one. These families are often asked to find oxygen themselves.

We, the senior medical students at the Global Alliance for Medical Excellence, demand a better future for all patients and their health care workers in low resource settings globally. By investing in oxygen now, you will not only save countless lives from the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, but also build a foundation of essential medicine beyond the pandemic. As the number of patients rise and the number of oxygen tanks fall, the burden often falls on clinicians who must decide who receives treatment; who will live and who will die.

As your future doctors we are speaking out for those who are fighting for every breath in countries all across the world as the pandemic continues to rage. All human beings deserve the right to breathe, to live, and to have access to oxygen. In the time it has taken you to read this declaration, 31 people have died from COVID-19 and another 24 from non-COVID pneumonia. Many of those lives could have been prevented with access to medical oxygen. We implore you to take action to finance the COVID-19 Emergency Oxygen Response – let's #ACTogether and #InvestinOxygen. Having to decide who gets the oxygen is not a call any doctor anywhere in the world should have to make. We urge you to act now.

Signed, The Doctors of Tomorrow

The Senior Medical students of the Global Alliance of Medical Excellence Universities)

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