

# United Nations urged to take bold action to curb non-communicable diseases

July 10 2014

---

(Medical Xpress)—In the journal *Nature* this week, Georgetown Law Professor Lawrence Gostin argues that coherent international regulations could spur local governments to adopt common-sense, cost-effective measures to prevent disease and promote healthy living. He urges the United Nations General Assembly (meeting in New York this week) to act to curb the looming pandemic of non-communicable diseases (NCDs).

According to Gostin, in every region except sub-Saharan Africa, more people die of NCDs, such as heart disease, cancer, diabetes and respiratory conditions, than from infectious diseases such as HIV, malaria and tuberculosis. Yet [infectious diseases](#) capture the bulk of global health funds and policy-making, and NCD prevention is plagued by timid politics. Gostin argues that the food, alcohol and tobacco industries spend lavishly on marketing and effectively lobbying to prevent taxes and regulations aimed at reducing obesity and improving public health.

In the article, Gostin calls on the U.N. General Assembly to take four bold steps for coordinated action on a global scale: (1) a new dedicated Global Fund on NCDs to achieve a 25 percent reduction in premature NCD mortality by 2025; (2) higher taxes and regulation on unhealthy foods, alcohol and tobacco; (3) changing urban environments, schools and workplaces to foster physical activity (e.g., bike shares, bike lanes, parks and playgrounds); and (4) an "all-of-government," "all-of-society" approach, coordinating across branches of government and social sectors

such as agriculture, transportation and the environment.

The damage caused by "lifestyle" diseases goes well beyond individual responsibility, writes Gostin. NCDs "should be reframed as a collective problem that requires a global response." He believes that the World Health Organization, in conjunction with a new Global Fund on NCDs, should collect data, provide technical support on smart regulations and help implement prevention plans at the national and local level.

Gostin says, "The global funding and response to NCDs is paltry, short-sighted and wholly disproportionate to the suffering, early death, and economic costs (projected at \$47 trillion cumulatively by 2030) of the NCD pandemic. This calls for major reforms of [global health](#) priorities and global governance."

**More information:** Non-communicable diseases: Healthy living needs global governance, [www.nature.com/news/non-communicable-diseases-healthy-living-needs-global-governance-1.15510](http://www.nature.com/news/non-communicable-diseases-healthy-living-needs-global-governance-1.15510)

Provided by Georgetown University Medical Center

Citation: United Nations urged to take bold action to curb non-communicable diseases (2014, July 10) retrieved 27 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2014-07-nations-urged-bold-action-curb.html>

<p>This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.</p>
--