



IFMSA

International Federation of
Medical Students' Associations

International Federation of Medical Students' Associations (IFMSA)

*67th March Meeting General Assembly 2018
Hurghada, Egypt*

Hurghada Youth Call to Action on Universal Health Coverage



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We, the members of the International Federation of Medical Students' Associations (IFMSA), having met at the 67th General Assembly in Hurghada Egypt, have organised a Youth discussion on Universal Health Coverage. We join together to highlight the importance of addressing the growing burden of accessing healthcare services all around the world, and achieving Universal Health Coverage.

One of the major causes of poor health and premature mortality is a lack of access to essential health services. This poses a major problem across the globe and is a product of a multitude of health sector and external factors. The IFMSA highly supports the global movement towards Universal Health Coverage. The momentum for Universal Health Coverage should be kept high and major progress should be made.

The IFMSA emphasizes that youth and medical students, representing the future generation and workforce, play an integral role in the worldwide movement towards achieving Universal Health Coverage. IFMSA is committed to support the global movement, and to equip the future healthcare providers with the knowledge and skills they need to play an active role in the process.

The 67th March Meeting General Assembly of IFMSA was held in Sahl Hasheesh, Hurghada, Egypt from the 1st to the 7th of March 2018, where over 900 medical students from 100 countries gathered in one place, under the theme of Universal Health Coverage. IFMSA members, joined by representatives from the World Health Organization, UHC2030, THENet and Global Health Strategies discussed the different aspects of UHC and how can medical student play an important role in the worldwide movement to reach UHC by 2030.

The IFMSA has conducted a survey in March 2018, which was filled by **262** medical students from **80** countries. They were asked several questions and the results are the following:

- Have you been taught about Universal Health Coverage in medical school?
65.5%: No
35.5%: Yes
- What do you think are the obstacles your country faces trying to reach Universal Health Coverage? (Multi Selection)
57.3%: Financial Hardship
43.1%: No adequate health workforce in terms of training and number
40.5%: No political will to achieve Universal Health Coverage.
25.2%: Privatization of health sector
- Would you consider working in a rural area in your country?
40.8%: Maybe
35.1%: Yes
24%: No
- If no, please specify the reason: (Multi Selection)
60%: No career advancement
57.1%: Bad working and living conditions
48.2%: Lack of Infrastructure
31.2%: Bad payment
- Are you planning to migrate to continue your studies/work outside your country?
50.8%: Yes
33.2%: Maybe
16%: No

medical
students
worldwide



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The IFMSA affirms that:

1. Universal Health Coverage is a key component to achieve the human right to health;
2. The worldwide movement towards Universal Health Coverage is an essential step towards reducing health inequalities and achieving health for all;
3. Everybody should be able to access health services including promotion, prevention, treatment, rehabilitation and palliative care. We stress the important role that primary healthcare serving a population can have in each of these services, as it enables one medical practitioner and their team to integrate all these services; and to follow people throughout their life course;
4. The quality and quantity of the health workforce in any given country play a significant role in improving health outcomes and achieving greater equity in health locally, nationally, regionally and globally;
5. Universal access to health care should be complemented with a political will and a whole-of-government actions addressing the socioeconomic determinants of health;
6. The Social Determinants of Health are fundamental principles of the Federation, representing our common understanding of the current global health situation and our vision for the future of global health;
7. Primary Health Care is an essential foundation of Universal Health Coverage. It enables greater access to services, better quality of care, with a greater focus on prevention, early management of diseases and reduces unnecessary specialistic care;
8. Increasing the ratio of health workers in rural locations and adapting services to the needs of the population is key to achieve Universal Health Coverage (UHC);
9. Medical schools should improve and reform the curricula to respond to current and future health needs and challenges in society, and reorient their education, research and service priorities accordingly.

IFMSA has reflected on the outcomes of this UHC survey and the discussion held in March Meeting 2018 in Egypt, Hurgada, and decided to take on leadership role by calling upon medical students and its National Members Organizations (NMOs) to:

- Build momentum for Universal Health Coverage within the Federation by creating new initiatives and harnessing existing structures;
- Raise awareness and address Universal Health Coverage through a human rights-based approach, emphasizing the fact that the Right to Health, as one of the basic human rights, should always be respected, protected and fulfilled;
- Promote the choice of a primary healthcare career through awareness raising among fellow students, and exposure to the options and dynamics of this career choice. In addition to promoting public health and primary healthcare professional exchanges in IFMSA;
- Advocate for national policies that address the dynamics of health labor market and the importance of health workforce in achieving Universal Health Coverage;
- To participate in education, research, and advocacy activities that are geared towards universal health coverage;
- Expand the outreach of their UHC-related efforts by not only fostering existing partnerships but also by seeking new strategic collaborations. Said efforts should always be carried out through a multidisciplinary lens and involve the communities we serve at all stages.



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We furthermore understand the critical role of interprofessional collaboration to achieve UHC, and the role of various stakeholders in this process. Therefore, we call on:

Governments to:

- Align their actions with the philosophy of “leaving no one behind”. Only through addressing the needs of the most vulnerable and marginalized populations, countries will be able to reach and ensure health for all;
- Ensure out-of-pocket expenditure for healthcare is kept at a minimum for the most essential services and increase government expenditure in an efficient and equitable manner to strengthen public health systems;
- Push for the inclusion of health in all policies through the development of multi-sectoral collaborations;
- Fully implement the recommendations set in the Global Strategy on Human Resources for Health: Workforce 2030, the recommendations of the High-Level Commission on Health Employment and Economic Growth, and the five year action plan (Working for Health);
- Engage civil society and youth organizations, and emphasize the importance of their role to advocate for setting health workforce planning and forecasting as a national priority in their countries;
- Develop policies and strategic implementation frameworks that focus on increasing the rural health workforce, while providing appropriate working conditions and career opportunities;
- Promote political commitment, aligned between the ministries of health, education and finance, across private and public sectors and educational and training institutions, professional associations, labor unions, development partners, international organizations and civil society;
- Invest and foster investment in the health workforce as well as in the education of future health workers. At least 5% of their domestic GDP should be invested on health, prioritizing the placement of healthcare professionals in adequate number, skills mix and distribution and use of resources efficiently and equitably while ensuring that any external financial support is complementary.

The World Health Organization to:

- Provide governments with the technical advice and political push to continue with national efforts to achieve Universal Health Coverage;
- Create more spaces for global sharing of knowledge and best practices among governments;
- Develop a framework that supports the placement of health workers and the distribution of services nationally, regionally and globally.



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Universities and Medical schools to:

- Integrate health systems knowledge on Universal Health Care in their curriculum in order to produce future doctors with capacity to work in universal health care systems and serve as change agents;
- Reform their education strategies towards the global health priorities and integrating important concepts as health equity, social determinants of health, and health financing into existing medical curricula;
- Improve and strengthen rural training and exposure opportunities throughout medical school (e.g. rural clinical schools) and the quality of these programs;
- Provide transformative medical education to support the scaling up of health workers which are community-, competency- and team-based, and relevant to the population; and adapt their institutional set-up and modalities of instruction to respond to transformative educational needs;
- Raise understanding on the role of medical students and doctors in the health systems, not only as healthcare providers, but also on actively taking part in the construction and implementation of health policies and promoting the well-being of their communities;
- Ensure that learning outcomes and the health professions curricula reflect the competencies and abilities that are aligned with the health needs of the communities. Such competencies and educative mission and strategies should be periodically assessed in order to evaluate the effectiveness and quality of the learning process and its relevance.