

Geneva Health Forum 2016, Day 1, 19th April 2016 Summary of Sessions and Debates

Innovation has the ability to improve all aspects of health – this includes its business model, delivery of the services, consumer satisfaction, and technology. Despite the benefits that innovation offers to all fields of health, often times innovations are seldom successfully launched as sustainability can be a major obstacle. In the first plenary session of the Geneva Health Forum 2016, speakers explored the innovation process of taking an idea and turning it into an innovation. A key to successfully implementing an idea is utilizing a multi-disciplinary approach or collaborating with experts from a variety of fields.

The parallel morning sessions covered a number of topics. The newly adopted Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) endeavor not only to encompass the idea that development must also include the environment, natural resources, human rights, and global economic growth, but also to include health as a chief component in all aspects of the new focus in international development. In a parallel session, panelists discussed how health and development as a whole can benefit from approaching issues, which are often complex and multi-layered, from a multi-sectorial and holistic manner. This approach was further strengthened by examining how partnerships across multiple sectors helped the AIDS and similar movements to gain traction. During another parallel session, MSF discussed its groundbreaking results about changing the way diabetes are managed in humanitarian emergencies and low-income settings. In a separate parallel session, the discussion of drug addiction has evolved from a question of morals to the understanding that addiction is a disease which has presented challenges in effective treatment strategies for those who suffer from this disease. Using a gradualism model, panelists discussed the abstinence versus harm-reduction arguments. Further discussion revolved around the implementation of opiate-assisted treatments. In another parallel session, field actors discussed clinical research practices. While clinical research has gone global, the guidelines for it were written over twenty years ago. Attendees of this parallel discussion, explored whether the guidelines should be revised. In the World Health Summit, the emerging challenges of the Chikungunya and Zika virus were discussed. Topics included the epidemiology of both viruses and the challenges that these viruses present.

During the lunch sessions, Merck led a discussion on the tools needed to make informed health decisions. Another lunch session explored the need for cooperation between human and veterinary health services in order to fight antibiotic resistance. In the third lunch session, Switzerland was used as a case study to investigate how to apply universal ethical and regulatory standards.

After the lunch sessions, several parallel sessions occurred to cover a wide range of health topics. Zika was examined in hindsight of the Ebola epidemic. Speakers and panelists discussed the challenges of handling this new epidemic and whether we had learned from the recent Ebola one. In parallel, challenges in oral health were discussed in terms of the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases. The need, interest, and obstacles for specialized medicine in the Global South was the topic of conversation in a third parallel session. The World Health Summit explored the internationalization of medical education and ensuring quality across all programs.

After a coffee break, participants had several sessions to choose from: one that gave an overview of the challenges in transforming transparency efforts in global health into concrete outcomes, another that provided an overview of current and emerging prevention approaches for cervical cancer in low-income countries, another on the topic of improving the quality of care after disasters, one on the role of pharmacists and using medicine properly, and finally the World Health Summit was held on how think tanks and academic institutions can be catalysts in accelerating the implementation of the SDG agenda in global health.

The first day of the Geneva Health Forum ended with the Official Opening Ceremony in which some highlights of the Hackathon 2016 were announced and several speakers took the stage to emphasize the collaborative nature needed to solving the various health issues discussed. Overall, the first day of the Geneva Health Forum tackled a variety of topics with multiple stakeholders working together to find innovative solutions to address Global Health challenges.

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- More details available in the **Highlights of Day 1**, and the **Geneva Health Journal Numbers 1 and 2**