



Memorandum

1. Purpose

To request the approval of the Governing Council to:

1. Rename the Global Health Equity Working Group to the Global Health Equity and Digital Technology Working Group
2. Expand the scope of the working group to include digital technology
3. Appoint Dr Stefan Buttigieg and Vina Hulamm as co-chairs of the Global Health Equity and Digital Technology Working Group

A brief motivation is given below.

2. Background and motivation

Over the past two years (2015-2017), the Global Health Equity Working Group (GHEWG) focused on the following inter-linked activities:

1. A WFPHA/Aetna Foundation-sponsored concurrent session on digital technology and health equity held during the 14th World Congress on Public Health in Kolkata (India) in February 2015;¹
2. The 2016 publication of a special electronic Supplement issue in the *Journal of Public Health Policy* containing several articles that examine the use of DT in the public health sector and its impact on human health and health equity within different contexts;²
3. A 2016 WFPHA Discussion Paper on DT that provides ideas and strategies on the use of DT (e.g. webpage, social media platforms, etc.) to improve organizational, programmatic and advocacy effectiveness, and to reduce population health and health system inequities.³

¹ WFPHA Report to Aetna Foundation, July 2015

² Chauvin, J & Rispel LC. Digital technology, population health, and health equity. *Journal of Public Health Policy* (2016) 37, S145–S153. doi:10.1057/s41271-016-0041-0

³ Chauvin J. *Exploring the use of digital health technology for population health and health equity gains*. Discussion Paper prepared for the WFPHA, August 2016.

At the 15th World Congress on Public Health held in Melbourne Australia in April 2017, two meetings were held that relate to the work of the Working Group:

- A WFPHA meeting on the use & impact of digital technologies for population health and health equity gains, held on Tuesday, 4 April 2017
- A meeting of the GHEWG on Wednesday 6 April 2017.

The first meeting (4 April 2017), attended by 14 participants, focused on the new proposed WFPHA Aetna Foundation-funded initiative, and the identification of elements of a possible future WFPHA initiative to help expand and improve the effective use of digital technology (DT) by public health associations (PHAs) to (a) to improve their organizational capabilities, (b) to contribute to an improvement in population health (disease & injury prevention, health promotion, health protection, population health assessment, surveillance, emergency response), and (c) to address issues of health equity.

Following extensive deliberation at the meeting, the following represents a consensus about a way forward for WFPHA on the issues of health equity and digital technology:

- A proposal be tabled before the WFPHA's Governing Council to rename the Global Health Equity Working Group as the Global Health Equity and Digital Technology Working Group
- The scope of any future initiative should have realistic expectations/outcomes, and focus on capacity building of PHAS to use DT to enhance their organizational (functionality, reaching members, etc.) and their communications/advocacy capacity;
- Develop a competency framework for DT in public health, which would form the basis for a DT strategy for PHAS;
- Prepare a spreadsheet of how PHAS use DT and use this as a baseline against which to monitor how they use DT over time. Perhaps combine this with conducting a more in-depth 'needs assessment' regarding DT – redo the survey of WFPHA PHA members;
- Set up a 'learning management system' and develop on-line courses using DT to enhance PH practitioner knowledge and skills;
- Help PHAS develop a communications plan/strategy within their organizational strategic plans that incorporates DT as a means to an end;
- Develop a WFPHA policy brief on the use of DT by PHAS;
- Establish links with other organizations and agencies interested in the use of DT within public health (e.g., WHO, HIMS – Health Information Management Society, IDRC) and explore other funding possibilities (e.g., Gates Foundation, Vodafone);
- Keep in mind the importance of communicating in other languages (e.g., French, Spanish);
- To ensure equity WFPHA should use a user-friendly open-source platform and apps.

The second meeting was an ordinary meeting of the GHEWG, was attended by six people, and focused on an overview of progress of the working group in the previous year (including feedback on the deliberations of the meeting of 4 April 2017), achievements, and suggested key activities in the coming year, until the next general assembly meeting. The second meeting endorsed the proposal to house initiatives on digital technology as part of the GHEWG.

Furthermore, the second meeting recommended that Dr Stefan Buttigieg and Vina Hulamm be appointed as co-chairs of the re-named working group for several reasons: Professor Rispel will assume the WFPHA presidency in May 2018, and it is inappropriate for her to continue as chair of the working group; both Stefan and Vina are young public health professionals, passionate about health equity, digital technology, and expanding the footprint of the Federation.

3. Recommendation

That the Governing Council approves the:

1. Renaming of the Global Health Equity Working Group to the Global Health Equity and Digital Technology Working Group
2. Expand the scope of the working group to include digital technology
3. Appoint Dr Stefan Buttigieg and Vina Hulamm as co-chairs of the Global Health Equity and Digital Technology Working Group

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