

Global Public Health Policy Responses to Rising Incidence of Non-Communicable Diseases: An Unending War

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Abstract—Global health scenario has been changing where 63 percent of all deaths occurring due to Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs). Several steps are being taken by the nations to invest in the policies that prevent premature deaths by reducing the risk factors. However, one major need of those who already suffer from these diseases - access to essential medicines remains largely unaddressed. Therefore, objective of this study was to find out global public health policy responses and their implications on improving access to medicines for NCDs. A scoping review was done from Pubmed (MEDLINE), EMBASE and CINAHL databases using key word based search strategy. Keywords include- medicines, pharmaceutical policy, access, global health and intellectual property. Studies having any of the three terms from “equity”, “access”, “medicines” and “policies” in the title or abstract were included for further analysis. Total 41 studies were included based on their relevance to the objective of the study.

Following the political declaration of the UN high-level meeting on NCDs, governments have adopted a goal of 25% reduction in relative mortality from NCDs by 2025. Despite this, the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDG) Progress Report of 2014 mentions that medicines to combat major diseases are still unavailable and unaffordable to many who need them. The evolving regime of Intellectual Property Rights, especially after Doha Declaration and corresponding flexibilities provided under Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) agreement, does not seem to provide promising environment for the countries seeking to improve the availability of essential medicines for NCDs. A strong movement and advocacy is needed with resilient political commitment and effective partnerships for adoption of positive measures like shared intellectual property rights, patent pooling and promotion of generic competition, to ensure that actions to combat the burden of NCDs are rooted in the post-2015 human development agenda.