

Statement by Medicus Mundi International to the 70th session of the World Health Assembly on agenda item 15.6 Cancer prevention and control in the context of an integrated approach

MMI would like to take this opportunity to address agenda item 15.6. This statement is supported by PHM.

Cancer is a leading causes of morbidity and mortality worldwide and we consider discussions on this agenda item as vital.

However, the document ignores important issues. It contains no substantive discussion of 'integrated care', which is referenced in the title.

WHO has a role in addressing the prices of vaccines, drugs, biologics and other tools used for prevention, diagnosis and treatment of cancer. This is not adequately addressed in the document. Currently the market driven system of R&D, uses IP-protected monopolies to incentivise R&D, thus artificially inflating the prices of treatments for NCDs, including cancer. We welcome the proposal for WHO to prepare a comprehensive technical report to EB144 that examines pricing approaches, including transparency, and their impact on availability and affordability of cancer medicines. We would however have preferred a clearer mandate for the report that includes exploration of a collaborative R&D mechanism which explicitly delinks the cost of new drug development from the final price.

We would also like to comment on the regulatory regimes in place regarding biosimilars. A large proportion of new anti-cancer medicines are Biologics and they are also the most expensive. Barriers to the introduction of low cost biosimilars relate not only to IPRs but more importantly to regulatory barriers. While WHO has been involved in efforts to harmonise regulatory standards for biosimilars, we are concerned that there appears to be a reluctance to proactively promote biosimilar use and their marketing approval. It is regrettable that this issue has not been addressed in the Secretariat report or in the draft resolution. We urge WHO to commission a comprehensive report to address the issue.

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