WHO Program May Eliminate Active Trachoma’s Blindness Risk by 2030

A World Health Organization program launched in 1996 to eliminate active trachoma by 2020 did not reach its goal. However, the number of people at risk of trachoma blindness declined by 90% between 2002 and 2018, and the risk may yet be eliminated by 2030, according to analysis of data from 38 countries published in The Lancet Global Health.

The leading infectious cause of blindness worldwide, active, inflammatory trachoma is caused by infection with the Chlamydia trachomatis bacterium. A prevalence rate of less than 5% among children aged 1 to 9 years is thought to eliminate blindness risk. Achieving that rate in local areas known as implementation units is the program goal.

Active trachoma is controlled by a combination of surgery, antibiotics, facial cleanliness, and environmental improvement. The strategy includes mass azithromycin administration in implementation units where active trachoma is present in at least 5% of children aged 1 to 9 years. As prevalence increases, the number of recommended mass vaccination rounds also increases, from 1 to as many as 7.

Of 2097 implementation units where active trachoma was ever endemic, many of which were identified from 2013 to 2015, 1923 (91.7%) have had mass drug administration, with 1182 (56.4%) reaching the risk elimination target of less than 5%. Among 1731 units where impact surveys were conducted, prevalence has dropped by at least 50% in 1465 (84.6%) units.

While 11 countries effectively eliminated trachoma as a public health risk, recrudescence occurred in others. “Although great progress has been made towards global elimination, the timeline will be longer than was initially thought,” the authors wrote.

One-third of English GPs Plan to Quit Within 5 Years

The US isn’t the only place where primary care practice is on the ropes. About 33% of nearly 2300 general practitioners (GPs) in England said they were planning to quit direct patient care within 5 years, according to a University of Manchester survey.

Those who reported a “considerable” or “high” likelihood of quitting included 61% who were older than 50 years and about 1 in 6 who were younger than 50 years.

“The fact that 16% of GPs under the age of 50 are thinking about leaving their jobs is worrying, and suggests that work is still needed to ensure that general practice is sustainable for the long term,” survey leader Katherine Checkland, MBBS, PhD, said in a statement.

Conducted for the 11th time since 1998, the 2021 GP survey found overall satisfaction declined since 2019, with just under half reporting dissatisfaction with their job. “Recognition for good work” and “satisfaction with variety in the job” were particular sore points.

The percentage of GP National Health Service (NHS) partners earning more than £110 000 (US $142 934) fell to 40.6% in 2021 from 44.6% in 2019. At the same time, the proportion who earned less than £50 000 (US $65 995) rose 3.1% while their median weekly work hours increased to 30 from 29. The percentage of salaried NHS GPs earning less than £50 000 fell to 41.5% in 2021 from 44.6% in 2019. At the same time, the proportion who earned less than £110 000 fell to 40.6% in 2019. Overall, the average work week shrank from 40 hours in 2019 to 38.4 in 2021, marking the second survey in which hours worked per week dropped after remaining stable from 2008 to 2017.

The survey findings help to inform the national Doctors’ and Dentists’ Pay Review Body’s policy decisions.

Ukraine and Russia are major exporters of wheat and maize. Russia is also a major gas and oil producer. Shortfalls due to the war have and are likely to continue raising prices for these commodities.

Acute food insecurity is a lack of food that puts lives or livelihoods in immediate danger. The WFP analysis envisions that higher food and fuel prices will cause food to become unaffordable for millions. Even before the war, world food prices hit an all-time high in February and remain volatile, according to the UN Food and Agriculture Organization. Sub-Saharan Africa is expected to be hit hardest in both absolute terms and relative to already large acutely food-insecure populations.

To ameliorate the crisis, WFP recommends addressing 4 food insecurity root causes: conflicts, climate crises, COVID-19, and costs. Adequate humanitarian support; creation of a food, fuel, and fertilizer import facility for the poorest countries; and safeguarding food production and transport infrastructure also could help.

— Howard D. Larkin

**Note:** Source references are available through embedded hyperlinks in the article text online.