



Original Research

Global, regional, and national burden of injuries, and burden attributable to injuries risk factors, 1990 to 2019: results from the Global Burden of Disease study 2019

GBD 2019 Injuries Collaborators

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 26 February 2024

Received in revised form

27 May 2024

Accepted 11 June 2024

Keywords:

Injury

Burden of diseases

Injuries risk factors

ABSTRACT

Objectives: In this study, the trends and current situation of the injury burden as well as attributable burden to injury risk factors at global, regional, and national levels based on the Global Burden of Diseases, Injuries, and Risk Factors Study (GBD) 2019 are presented.

Study design: To assess the attributable burden of injury risk factors, the data of interest on data sources were retrieved from the Global Health Data Exchange (GHDx) and analyzed.

Methods: Cause-specific death from injuries was estimated using the Cause of Death Ensemble model in the GBD 2019. The burden attributable to each injury risk factor was incorporated in the population attributable fraction to estimate the total attributable deaths and disability-adjusted life years. The Socio-demographic Index (SDI) was used to evaluate countries' developmental status.

Results: Globally, there were 713.9 million (95% uncertainty interval [UI]: 663.8 to 766.9) injuries incidence and 4.3 million (UI: 3.9 to 4.6) deaths caused by injuries in 2019. There was an inverse relationship between age-standardized disability-adjusted life year rate and SDI quintiles in 2019. Overall, low bone mineral density was the leading risk factor of injury deaths in 2019, with a contribution of 10.5% (UI: 9.0 to 11.6) of total injuries and age-standardized deaths, followed by occupational risks (7.0% [UI: 6.3–7.9]) and alcohol use (6.8% [UI: 5.2 to 8.5]).

Conclusion: Various risks were responsible for the imposed burden of injuries. This study highlighted the small but persistent share of injuries in the global burden of diseases and injuries to provide beneficial data to produce proper policies to reach an effective global injury prevention plan.

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Introduction

Injuries impose a considerable burden on public health, leading to more than 3200 disability-adjusted life years (DALYs) per 100,000 people in 2019.¹ According to the cause hierarchy of the Global Burden of Diseases (GBD) study, injuries are subcategorized into three groups: Unintentional injuries (occurs unplanned or caused by external factors; e.g. falls), transport injuries (including road and non-road transport injuries), and self-harm and interpersonal violence (injuries deliberately inflicted on oneself or that are due to the intentional use of physical force from another person; e.g. sexual violence).² Each of the subcategories contributed to more than two percent of global deaths and 2.5 percent of global DALYs in 2019.¹

Injuries are a cause of loss of health and human resources that could be almost universally averted by improving safety and prevention programs and ensuring access to appropriate trauma care.² Certain modifiable risk factors, including alcohol and drug use, smoking, occupational risks, and low bone mineral density have

been suggested to contribute to injury-related deaths and DALYs.³ Moreover, low- and middle-income countries take on 88% of the total injury burden, and it has been shown that providing basic surgical care in these countries could potentially avert 21% of the global injury burden.⁴ If injury-related death rates in these countries could be reduced to rates in high-income countries, more than two million lives would be saved yearly, and there would be more than 750 billion U.S. dollars associated economic benefits per year.⁵

Injury burden estimates are crucial to guide policy development and healthcare investments that aim to reduce the incidence of injuries and increase access to high-quality and timely trauma care.⁶ However, there are several methodological challenges in estimating the burden of injuries, including obtaining data in data-sparse and burden-heavy areas of the world, developing adjustments for ill-defined causes of death, adjusting known biases in data such as underestimation in sexual violence data, and estimating the cause of injury separately from resulted bodily harm.⁷ Although the burden of injuries is widely studied and monitored by various research methods, the GBD is the only study framework

that routinely provides estimates of incidence, mortality, and DALYs for an exhaustive list of injuries.^{2,8} The objective of this study is to present detailed information on trends and the current situation of the injury incidence, deaths, and DALYs, along with burden attributable to risk factors of injuries at global, regional, and national levels based on the GBD 2019. This study is the first of its kind that provides estimates of the burden of injuries attributable to risk factors, emphasizing the importance of changing perceptions about injury-related health loss as preventable events.

Methods

Overview

Detailed descriptions of the study design, the standardized data collection protocol, the International Classification of Disease (ICD) codes used in identifying injuries causes, and methods of the GBD 2019 have been provided before.^{1,3} A brief overview of the GBD 2019 methods specific to injury burden and risk factors are presented here. The data of interest on data sources, as well as injury burden and risk factors, were retrieved from the Global Health Data Exchange (GHDx), a website developed by the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME).⁹ An injury death was defined in the GBD 2019 as one where the injury was the primary cause of the death, and a non-fatal injury was specified as an injury necessitating medical care. The input data used in estimations consisted of 4053 sources for causes of death and 368 sources for non-fatal health outcomes. Besides, the input data for seven level-2 risk factors were 3881, 1650, 1430, 411, 178, 154, and 9 sources for tobacco, occupational risks, alcohol use, intimate partner violence, low bone mineral density, drug use, and non-optimal temperature, respectively. In the GBD 2019, injury causes were broken down into three level 2 causes: transport injuries, unintentional injuries, and self-harm and interpersonal violence. The estimates were produced for 204 countries under seven GBD super-regions, including Central Europe, Eastern Europe and Central Asia, East Asia and Oceania, high-income, Latin America and Caribbean, North Africa and the Middle East; South Asia, South East Asia, and Sub-Saharan Africa.

Mortality

Cause-specific death from injuries was estimated using the Cause of Death Ensemble model (CODEm) in the GBD 2019, as has been described in detail previously.^{1,10} The CODEm inputs consisted of mortality estimates as well as covariates with potential implications for injury-related death. Essentially, the CODEm framework uses an ensemble of multiple modeling algorithms of rates or causes fractions with varying sets of covariates that perform best with out-of-sample predictive validity testing. The years of life lost (YLLs) were computed as a function of the cause-specific death rate multiplied by the residual life expectancy of each age group.

Non-fatal health outcomes

Injuries can be classified by cause as well as nature, with the cause being the accident that led to a particular nature of injury. First, the incidence of injuries caused in the GBD 2019 were estimated using DisMod-MR 2.1, a Bayesian meta-regression tool for the evaluation of all available data on incidence, prevalence, remission, and death related to a cause. Second, for each injury cause-nature, the fraction of incident cases was estimated and multiplied by the incidence of the corresponding cause of injury. Third, the prevalence of each injury nature was derived from the multiplication of estimated incidence and duration. Disability resulted from each injury nature were then calculated by

application of disability weights to the outcome prevalence and aggregated across natures of injury for each cause as years lived with disability (YLDs).

Attributable burden to risk factors

The six-step framework of comparative risk assessment (CRA) was used to estimate the attributable burden of injury risk factors in the GBD 2019.¹¹ The six steps of CRA are¹ the risk–outcome pairs inclusion into the analysis;² the relative risk calculation as a function of exposure;³ estimation of exposure levels and distributions;⁴ computation of the theoretical minimum risk exposure level (TMREL) as the counterfactual level of exposure;⁵ calculation of population attributable fractions (PAF) and attributable burden;⁶ and estimation of the mediating effects of various risk factors on each other to determine the burden of a combination of risk factors. A direct or indirect burden attributable to a particular risk factor was incorporated in the PAF to estimate the total attributable deaths and DALYs to that risk factor. The PAF measures the proportional reduction in the cause-specific burden that would occur if exposure to the risk factor was at the TMREL.

The summary exposure value (SEV) is the risk-weighted prevalence of exposure. The SEV ranges from 0 to 100, where the value 0 indicates there is no excess risk for the entire population while the value 100 means everyone in the population is exposed to the maximum risk.

Socio-demographic index

The Socio-demographic Index (SDI), a composite indicator of overall socio-economic development status was calculated in the GBD 2019 based on the educational attainment of those aged 15 years or older, lag distributed income per capita, and the total fertility rate among females under 25 years.¹² The SDI ranges from 0 to 1, where higher values indicate higher levels of development. Based on SDI quintiles, countries were divided into five groups: low SDI, low-middle SDI, middle SDI, high-middle SDI, and high SDI.

To account for changes in the population structure, age-standardization was performed by direct standardization of the global age structure. The rate estimates were expressed as per 100,000 population. The 95% uncertainty interval (UI) for each metric was calculated by taking 1000 samples from the posterior distribution, and using the 25th and 975th ranked draws of the uncertainty distribution.

Results

Overview

Globally, there were 713.9 million (95% UI: 663.8 to 766.9) injuries incidence and 4.3 million (3.9–4.6) deaths caused by injuries in 2019. Injuries with the all-ages death rate of 55.6 (50.7–59.6) and DALY rate of 3219.7 (2923.7 to 3551.0) accounted for 7.6% (7.0–8.0) and 9.8% (9.2–10.3) of all-cause deaths and DALYs worldwide in 2019, respectively. During 1990–2019, the age-standardized incidence rate of all injuries decreased by 12.9% (12.0–13.8), from 10,628.1 (9892.8 to 11,413.4) to 9259.4 (8601.9 to 9959.8). In the same time frame, the age-standardized DALY rate of all injuries shrank by 37.2% (32.8–41.1), with the YLLs component declining steeper than YLDs, 42.7% (37.4–47.0) vs. 11.5% (10.5–12.8).

Age and sex distribution of injuries

Overall, men with an age-standardized incidence rate of 10,914.7 (10,139.8 to 11,737.3) were at considerably higher risk of injuries

compared to women with 7538.7 (6992.9 to 8125.7) in 2019. Incidence rates were almost the same, with some variations in women among all age groups up to the 65–69 age group in 2019. In contrast, incidence rates in men increased after the under 1 age group, making a peak in the 20–24 age group, followed by a steady decrease until the 65–69 age group. In both sexes, incidence rates of injuries increased from the 70–74 age group, with women having steeper growth (Fig. 1). In 2019, injury incidence rates of men were significantly higher than women from age 15 up to 54, whereas women's incidence rate of injuries were higher in the 80+ age group. The age-standardized death rate of men due to injuries was notably higher than women in 2019, with 76.7 (69.7–83.0) and 33.2 (29.7–36.4), respectively. Men had higher death rates due to injuries in all age groups in 2019. Despite no significant difference in incidence rates among age groups between 1990 and 2019, both death and DALY rates of all age groups were consistently lower in 2019 (Appendix 1).

Geographical distribution of injuries

Among seven GBD super-regions, Central Europe, Eastern Europe, and Central Asia with 18,118.4 (16,496.1 to 19,750.5) experienced the highest age-standardized incidence rate in 2019, followed by high-income (13,694.8 [12,475.3 to 14,988.8]) and Latin America and Caribbean (9747.2 [8989.8 to 10,561.9]). Central Europe, Eastern Europe, and Central Asia with 4168.5 (3712.6 to 4748.9) had the most injury-related age-standardized DALY rates, whereas high-income with 2250.1 (1981.6 to 2588.4) had the least. High SDI countries with 13,785.1 (12,597.4 to 15,021.3) had the highest age-standardized incidence rate of injuries, and middle SDI countries with 7254.9 (6951.6 to 8144.5) had the lowest in 2019. There was an inverse relationship between age-standardized DALY rate and SDI quintiles in 2019, with low SDI countries (4019.0 [3532.5 to 4549.3]) and high SDI countries (2395.5 [2120.2 to 2743.7]) experiencing the highest and lowest rates, respectively (Appendix 2).

All-age incidence, deaths, YLLs, YLDs, and DALYs of injuries in 2019 by country is presented in (Appendix 3). New Zealand (32,242.0 [29,602.0 to 35,076.8]), Australia (27,590.1 [24,162.0 to 31,132.5]), and Slovenia (26,547.0 [23,951.5 to 29,453.4]) had the highest age-standardized incidence rate of injuries in 2019 (Appendix 4). From 1990 to 2019, Yemen with 99.1% (80.6–120.5) had the highest growth in age-standardized incidence rate, followed by Syrian Arab Republic (72.8% [63.4 to 82.2]), and Afghanistan (65.0% [57.2 to 73.6]). Afghanistan (217.5 [196.5 to 247.2]), Lesotho (166.8 [124.5 to 212.5]), and Central African Republic (147.6 [115.6 to 189.4]) were the leading countries in the age-standardized death rate of injuries in 2019 while Singapore (14.1 [13.2 to 14.9]), Malta (20.2 [18.2 to 22.1]), and Ireland (20.3 [19.0 to 21.5]) were the last countries in this regard (Appendix 5 and 6).

Injuries risk factors

Globally, low bone mineral density was the leading risk factor of injuries deaths in 2019 with a contribution to 10.5% (9.0–11.6) of total injuries age-standardized deaths, followed by occupational risks (7.0% [6.3–7.9]) and alcohol use (6.8% [5.2 to 8.5]). Meanwhile, occupational risks (276.7 [245.3 to 313.2]), low bone mineral density (206.8 [167.9 to 248.7]), and alcohol use (198.9 [150.7 to 251.6]) had the highest injury-related attributable age-standardized DALY rate in 2019 (Appendix 7). Among injury risk factors, drug use with 8.3% (–5.4 to 22.2) and tobacco with –21.3% (–22.7 to –20.0) change in age-standardized SEV over the 1990–2019 period had the most growth and decline in exposure, respectively. Nonetheless, except for non-optimal temperature, age-standardized DALY rate of injuries attributed to all seven risk factors of injuries shrank during 1990–2019.

Alcohol use was the leading risk factor for injuries in Central Europe, the Eastern Europe, and Central Asia (521.7 [389.6 to 659.6]), high-income (271.7 [199.0 to 346.0]), and Latin America and Caribbean (393.1 [292.9 to 508.9]) in terms of attributable age-standardized DALY rate in 2019. On the other hand, occupational risks in North Africa and Middle East (214.3 [193.9 to 239.8]), Southeast Asia, East Asia, and Oceania (276.1 [229.1 to 329.2]), and Sub-Saharan Africa (374.3 [338.7 to 413.9]) was the dominant risk factor of injuries in 2019 (Fig. 2). Notably, low bone mineral density with 335.5 (275.5–397.9) was the foremost injury risk factor of South Asia in the attributable age-standardized DALY rate. In 2019, the age-standardized DALY rate of injuries attributable to alcohol and drug use had a positive and intimate partner violence and occupational risks had a negative association with SDI quintiles.

Causes of injuries

Among the level-2 causes of injuries, unintentional injuries had the highest all-ages incidence rate with 7235.0 (6653.8 to 7885.3), followed by transport injuries (1379.0 [1163.8 to 1613.6]) and self-harm and interpersonal violence (613.0 [510.2 to 718.7]). Similarly, unintentional injuries were the leading cause of injuries burden in terms of both all-ages death and DALY rates, with 22.9 (20.0–25.2) and 1338.9 (1149.2 to 1547.5), respectively (Appendix 8). While the age-standardized incidence rate of transport injuries grew by 7.7% (5.4–9.8) over the 1990–2019 period, it had a declining trend for self-harm and interpersonal violence (–39.3% [–41.0 to –37.6]) and unintentional injuries (–12.8% [–13.7 to –11.8]) (Appendix 9); meanwhile, both age-standardized death and DALY rates of all three level-2 causes of injuries decreased during 1990–2019, with unintentional injuries having the sharpest decline (Appendix 10 and 11).

In all age groups, unintentional injuries had the highest incidence rate among level-2 causes of injuries, followed by transport injuries, and self-harm and interpersonal violence in 2019 except under 1 and 1–4 age groups in which self-harm and interpersonal violence exceeded transport injuries (Fig. 1). Self-harm and interpersonal violence were the leading level-2 causes of injury burden of ages 15 to 39 regarding both death and DALY rates in 2019 (Appendix 12). In 2019, the DALY rate of injuries related to self-harm and interpersonal violence shrank persistently after the 20–24 age group, whereas the DALY rate of unintentional injuries escalated continuously (Fig. 3).

Unintentional injuries were the leading level-2 cause of injury in all seven GBD super-regions regarding the age-standardized incidence rate in 2019; however, self-harm and interpersonal violence in Latin America and the Caribbean (1751.4 [1599.6 to 1916.1]) and transport injuries in North Africa and the Middle East (1365.1 [1145.2 to 1576.0]) were the foremost causes in age-standardized DALY rate (Appendix 2).

Road injuries

Among level-3 causes of injuries, road injuries with all-ages incidence rate of 1334.0 (1122.8 to 1567.4) in 2019 was the third leading cause of incidence; however, road injuries caused most injury-related DALYs, with an all-ages rate of 942.2 (837.9–1036.4) (Appendix 8). From 1990 to 2019, although the age-standardized incidence rate of road injuries grew by 8.9% (6.5–11.0), both age-standardized death and DALY rates decreased by 31.6% (25.0–38.9) and 31.0% (25.4–37.1), respectively (Appendix 9–11). In contrast to the declining pattern of age-standardized DALY rate of road injuries up to the 10–14 age group, there was a sharp rise in early adulthood peaking at the 20–24 age group, followed by a steady state (Appendix 13–15). There was a significant disparity between women

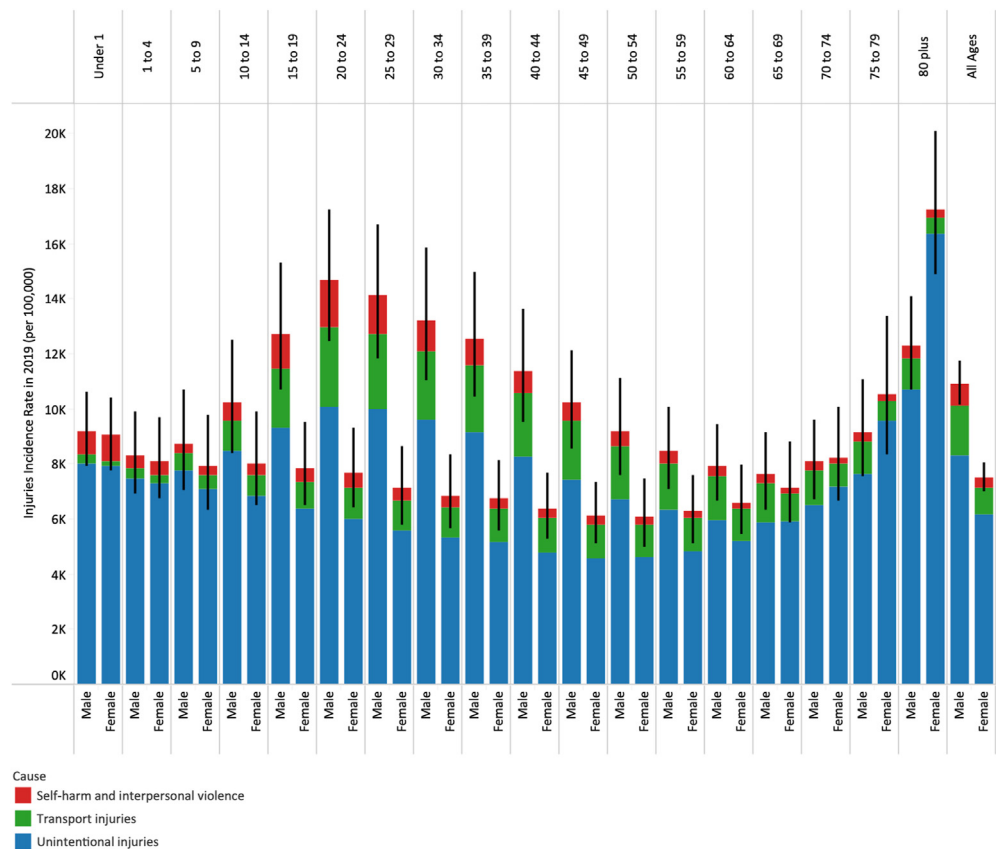


Fig. 1. Incidence rate of injuries in 2019 for sexes and age groups, colored by level-2 causes of injuries with 95% uncertainty intervals.

Location		Alcohol use	Drug use	Intimate partner violence	Low bone mineral density	Non-optimal temperature	Occupational risks	Tobacco
Socio-Demographic Index	High SDI	258.8 (188.5–330.1)	23.2 (13.1–36.4)	19.1 (13.2–26.0)	189.0 (147.2–239.5)	-68.5 (-88.3–49.5)	169.2 (137.9–211.2)	13.2 (8.9–18.8)
	High-middle SDI	257.2 (199.2–321.7)	9.8 (5.3–16.1)	22.5 (15.4–31.6)	181.2 (143.6–225.3)	-108.4 (-143.7–79.5)	222.3 (189.0–263.4)	16.0 (11.2–22.2)
	Middle SDI	185.4 (141.8–236.0)	4.4 (2.3–7.3)	24.9 (17.1–34.5)	194.2 (158.5–229.3)	-47.9 (-69.9–12.7)	250.0 (218.5–287.6)	15.4 (11.0–20.6)
	Low-middle SDI	170.3 (124.8–222.7)	4.9 (2.5–9.0)	24.0 (16.2–33.8)	272.0 (225.4–318.8)	8.6 (-26.4–85.3)	328.3 (279.2–383.1)	20.4 (14.9–27.0)
	Low SDI	127.8 (93.2–169.2)	2.3 (1.2–4.0)	31.8 (20.7–45.1)	249.7 (212.3–287.7)	18.0 (-17.7–92.2)	456.2 (405.4–513.2)	14.8 (10.6–19.8)
GBD Super-Regions	Central Europe, Eastern Europe, and Central Asia	521.7 (389.6–659.6)	25.5 (13.4–42.3)	22.7 (15.3–32.1)	215.5 (163.4–277.8)	-266.6 (-369.4–184.8)	236.9 (197.9–290.5)	21.0 (14.8–29.4)
	High-income	271.7 (199.0–346.0)	23.1 (13.1–35.8)	18.5 (12.8–25.1)	177.6 (137.7–226.1)	-78.2 (-98.3–59.0)	179.8 (145.2–227.6)	12.5 (8.4–18.0)
	Latin America and Caribbean	393.1 (292.9–508.9)	4.9 (2.5–8.2)	34.3 (22.6–49.0)	167.8 (136.7–197.1)	5.8 (-33.5–82.3)	261.2 (231.4–298.7)	9.0 (6.4–12.2)
	North Africa and Middle East	31.4 (20.9–43.9)	3.0 (1.5–5.2)	29.0 (20.1–38.3)	174.8 (136.6–207.6)	-30.4 (-54.1–16.7)	214.3 (193.9–239.8)	11.7 (8.0–15.9)
	South Asia	126.1 (85.6–176.7)	4.6 (2.1–8.9)	18.2 (12.2–26.4)	335.5 (275.5–397.9)	16.0 (-17.2–87.7)	322.8 (253.1–411.9)	21.8 (15.8–29.4)
	Southeast Asia, East Asia, and Oceania	162.5 (120.1–208.8)	3.8 (1.9–6.5)	22.9 (14.8–33.5)	175.7 (139.0–209.2)	-73.9 (-99.0–41.7)	276.1 (229.1–329.2)	17.9 (12.9–24.1)
	Sub-Saharan Africa	189.7 (141.8–242.6)	3.7 (1.9–6.2)	38.0 (25.2–53.9)	195.5 (167.0–224.7)	27.4 (-10.0–98.4)	374.3 (338.7–413.9)	8.0 (5.8–10.8)

Fig. 2. Age-standardized attributable DALY rate of injuries' risk factors in 2019 by location and SDI quintile. DALY, disability-adjusted life year; SDI, Socio-demographic Index.

and men in the burden of road injuries in 2019, with men enduring more than double the DALY rate compared to women. North Africa and the Middle East, with 1306.6 (1096.2 to 1509.1), had the highest age-standardized DALY rate of road injuries, while high income with 458.9 (427.9–491.7) had the lowest rate. SDI and burden of road

injuries had a definite inverse association in 2019, with a low SDI (1152.2 [977.1 to 1331.5]) and high SDI (562.1 [515.8 to 617.6]) countries experiencing the most and the least age-standardized DALY rate, respectively. Occupational risks with attribution to 15.3% (13.7–17.2) of the age-standardized DALY rate in 2019 was the

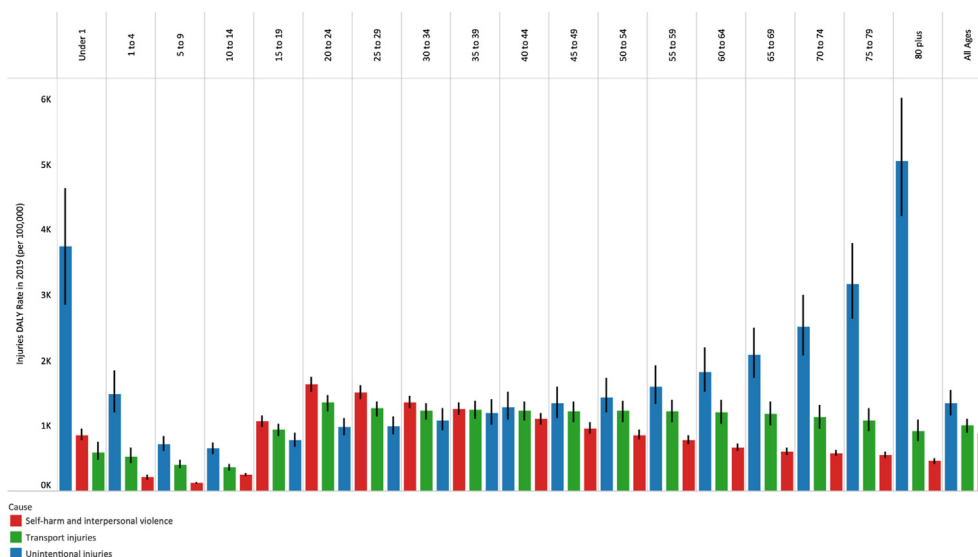


Fig. 3. Level-2 causes of injuries DALY rate in 2019 by age group with 95% uncertainty intervals. DALY, disability-adjusted life year.

leading risk factor of road injuries, followed by low bone mineral density (6.6% [5.5 to 7.3]) and alcohol use (6.1% [3.4 to 9.1]).

Falls

Falls was the foremost level-3 cause of injury in all-ages incidence rate with 2804.4 (2429.1 to 3214.5) as well as the second leading cause in terms of all-ages DALY rate with 508.7 (420.2–614.0) in 2019 (Appendix 8). There was an unceasing growth in the DALY rate of falls from early adulthood onward in 2019 (Appendix 13–15). Men with 580.6 (458.3–689.7) had a higher age-standardized DALY rate due to falls compared to women (407.7 [328.1 to 504.8]) in 2019. South Asia with 729.7 (621.5–856.6) and Sub-Saharan Africa with 279.9 (233.9–329.5) had the highest and lowest age-standardized DALY rate of falls in 2019, respectively. There was no clear association between SDI and the burden of falls, with low-middle SDI countries having the highest (597.6 [510.0 to 693.8]) and middle SDI countries having the lowest (442.0 [357.7 to 526.4]) age-standardized DALY rate in 2019. Low bone mineral density was the most influential risk factor of falls, with attribution to 25.2% (22.0–27.1) of the age-standardized DALY rate in 2019. Other risk factors of falls included occupational risks, alcohol use, and tobacco with 9.6% (8.6–10.9), 5.0% (2.3–8.5), and 1.9% (1.4–2.4) attribution to age-standardized DALY rate of falls, respectively.

Self-Harm

Self-harm, despite a relatively low all-age incidence rate (64.2 [54.8 to 75.9]) compared to other level-3 causes of injuries was the third leading cause of injuries in the all-ages DALY rate (441.0 [398.1 to 484.6]) in 2019 (Appendix 8). During 1990–2019, the age-standardized incidence rate of self-harm decreased by 31.8% (30.9–32.6) (Appendix 9). Over the same period, both age-standardized death and DALYs rates of self-harm shrank by 38.9% (32.7–43.9) and 38.9% (33.0–44.3) (Appendix 10 and 11). There was an escalation of the DALY rate from the 10–14 age group peaking at the 20–24 age group, followed by an unvarying declining trend in 2019 (Appendix 13–15). Men had a consistently higher DALY rate due to self-harm in all age groups compared to women in 2019. Central Europe, Eastern Europe, and Central Asia with 835.3 (758.2–944.2) had the highest age-standardized DALY rate of self-harm in 2019,

while North Africa and the Middle East, with 209.2 (173.7–256.0), had the lowest rate. Globally, the dominant risk factor of self-harm in 2019 was alcohol use, with an age-standardized attributable DALY rate of 59.0 (30.9–87.6), equivalent to 13.9% (7.3–20.5) of total self-harm age-standardized DALY rate.

Discussion

The current study reports the latest global, regional, and national incidence and burden of injuries and the responsible risk factors for overall injuries using the most updated GBD 2019 data to shed light on the pathway to curb the massive worldwide burden of injuries. The major findings of this study were the small but persistent share of injuries in the global burden of diseases and injuries, reaching almost one-tenth of the burden in terms of both deaths and DALYs. Among various types of injuries, unintentional injuries were responsible for the greatest share of this burden. Among the global population, the male sex was significantly higher at risk of injuries. The regional distribution of injuries varied profoundly in different categories of regions and countries, and some sub-categories of injuries were more prominent in specific regions showing disparities in the burden of injuries. Regarding the socio-economic status, it was remarkable that SDI had an inverse relationship with injuries' DALYs, and countries with lower SDI received the highest burden of injuries. Also, various metabolic, behavioral, and occupational risks were responsible for the imposed burden of injuries with some variations in the measures of burden.

A holistic approach to the burden of injuries and its trend through the years may not be wise due to the different nature of various causes contributing to the burden of injuries. Instead, breaking this burden into sub-categories like what was presented in this study may help more effectively understand this health issue and take action about it. In this regard, transport injuries, unintentional injuries and self-harm were the top contributors to the burden of injuries in the study period with some variations.

Among these causes, transport and road injuries were at a major point of focus in recent decades. A specific Sustainable Development Goal target (SDG target 3.6) was also dedicated to halving the number of global deaths and injuries from road traffic accidents by 2030. Although global authorities supported this target by

developing, suggesting, and implementing various programs at multiple levels, like road safety and sustainable transport plans for all countries,¹³ investigating the road injuries burden trend indicates a significant failure in the effectiveness and sufficiency of these actions and necessitate more global and local efforts in this regard.^{2,14,15} Considering all the available evidence, the one concrete fact is that improving road infrastructures, strengthening road safety legislation, and enhancing the quality and safety of vehicles could successfully lead to lower road injuries, mortalities, and the following burden.^{16,17}

Alongside transport injuries, unintentional injuries with two major components of falls and drowning compose a significant share of the global burden of injuries. Considering the diverse pattern of the mentioned causes and their incidence and burden measures among countries and locations, specific regional and national plans seem essential to improve the concern about unintentional injuries in all ages.^{18–20} However, the declining trend of DALYs for injuries with a steeper decline in YLLs might be due to unintentional and transport injuries, which are two main components of the burden of injuries have become less lethal due to improvements in health care and better preventive and safety measures. Among these types of injuries, fall-related injuries are a major public health issue affecting adults of all ages with a more prominent economic and disability burden on older people.^{21,22} Multiple covariates affect the rate and burden of fall-related injuries, including age, education, sex factors, and various comorbidities like non-communicable diseases and neurological disorders.^{23–26} For example, non-fatal fall-related injuries affect women significantly more than men.²⁴ This evidence highlights the need for the development and implementation of fall-related injury prevention programs, especially in older populations, to reduce disabilities and costs and improve the quality of life of the more vulnerable patients.^{27,28}

Discussing self-harm as the third major contributor to the burden of injuries shall not be neglected here by the proposed targeted interventions for the vulnerable populations and the primarily responsible risk factors like mental and substance use disorders.^{29,30} Among the drivers of the self-harm burden, suicide is the main contributor that, like other causes of injury, has variations and inducers like age, sex, and socio-economic status that need to be recognized for better management.^{31,32} In this regard, large-scale population-wide studies have found major biopsychosocial risk factors important in the incidence of suicide and other forms of self-harm.³³ Many global and national programs have been implemented to handle this public health issue; however, a major paradigm shift in the management of this cause of burden is needed by devoting resources to implement multilevel suicide prevention strategies that improve accessibility of care for at-risk people, increase awareness-raising and service provision, and restrict access to means of suicide.³⁴ Besides, focusing on the younger population trying to detect suicidal ideation and anxiety, and enhancing social connectedness has shown to be an effective measure in controlling the burden of self-harm.^{35,36}

The male population is significantly more vulnerable to the burden of injuries globally. This difference was apparent in both incidence and burden measures of deaths and DALYs. This difference has been suggested to exist due to two major factors of greater exposure to causes of injuries, especially road injuries, and higher rates of risky behaviors and injuries' risk factors in men.^{37,38} The higher burden of injuries in men could be due to greater levels of injury severity in males, leading to poorer outcomes.³⁹ Also, the postinjury quality of life and recovery significantly depend on sexual differences, necessitating the proper policies and actions to save the more susceptible share of the global population.⁴⁰

Geographic and socio-economic disparities in the burden of injuries existed at numerous levels in the current investigation of data. The major underlying cause for the higher burden of injuries in developing and low- and middle-income countries has been proposed to be the fact that, unfortunately, injuries receive lower priority in public health programs in these countries, resulting in a great neglected share of the burden of diseases and injuries.^{41,42} This lack of priority could possibly be a result of a lack of epidemiologic data and evidence in these areas, cultural and social restrictions regarding the burden of injuries and insufficient injury prevention programs, lack of solid multisectoral connections and efforts in health systems, and lack of proper and specific intervention for each country at a greater risk of the burden of injuries.⁴¹ These factors are associated with the weaker socio-economic states and essential infrastructure result in a higher burden of injuries in developing areas.^{43,44} An example of such constraints in these areas are limited implementation of cost-effective safety measures such as seatbelt and helmet use by car and motorcycle drivers, emphasizing the need for enhancement of road safety compliance globally and regionally.^{45–47}

Following the role of the socio-economic state in the burden of injuries, it is essential to mention the controversy on the role of gross domestic product (GDP) per capita and economic development on the burden of road injuries and other transport injuries as one of the significant contributors to the burden of injuries. Many studies in developing countries and other areas of the world have shown that GDP growth results in higher motorization rates and subsequent increases in road traffic injuries and related deaths and disabilities.^{48–51} Therefore, this evidence indicates more strict measures and approaches in higher-income areas and residents.⁵¹ However, it was strongly examined and showed that income level and road injury burden follow an inverted U curve, meaning the higher burden of injuries in areas with very low and very high income, and the turning point of burden varies in different societies with different levels of income.^{16,43,50}

Considering validated risk factors responsible for the burden of injuries is a substantial part of approaching this burden. In this study, a combination of diverse risk factors was at the top rank of risks regarding their attributable burden. We discuss low bone mineral density and alcohol use as leading risks in the imposed burden here. Low bone density as a major risk of mortality due to falls—as a significant share of unintentional injuries discussed before—has shown to have a growing burden in recent years, that its real burden seems to be neglected and needs to be taken care of before the frailty ages, when the major attributable burden to this risk factor happens.^{52,53} Implementing practice frameworks and global plans like the International Osteoporosis Foundation's Capture the Fracture Campaign is beneficial to alleviate the burden of fractures in the elderly due to low bone mineral density and improves patient care.⁵⁴ Alcohol use was another remarkable risk factor in the findings of this study that is responsible majorly for road injuries, and also for self-harm and interpersonal violence as important causes of injuries.⁵⁵ Although excessive alcohol use results in various fatal and non-fatal burdens, what matters here is the trauma-related death and disability, especially in the younger proportion of the population, leading to a more noticeable burden of injuries.^{56,57} Therefore, appropriate global policies and strategies are needed to handle the considerable and avoidable burden of alcohol use.⁵⁸ Suggested policies to reduce harmful alcohol consumption and associated injuries have been increasing the price and tax on alcohol beverages, which has proved to be an effective tool to control this issue in some countries.^{59,60} Other behavioral and psychological risk factors are also related to the burden of injuries, which need further investigation.^{61,62}

The primary limitations of this study lie behind the data collection, modeling, and estimation process that introduces the availability of input data as its main concern.⁶³ However, each GBD iteration tries to improve the results by enhancing the data collection process. The latest GBD 2019 refined the identification and measurement methods of outcomes to overcome this issue.¹ Also, risk factors attributable burden estimations received reassessments of dose-response relationships for some risks to improve results.³ One of the main limitations of this study was the availability of primary data on injuries. Nevertheless, GBD has been implementing several predictor models to overcome the availability and accuracy of the primary data to overcome this limitation. Moreover, limitations regarding injuries were specifically about the newly added police data for road injuries and interpersonal violence to aid complete the insufficient data of vital registries from some countries; however, assessments of the recruited data with vital registries in countries with decent data quality showed a widespread discrepancy proposing a major underestimation of factual death rates. To overcome this concern, GBD 2019 only employed the new data in cases where the reported police data were higher than vital registration statistics.¹ Underestimation of certain types of injuries and differences in such biases across cultures and regions could be another limitation to be declared. Despite the mentioned limitations, this study tried to present the most updated and available statistics of injury epidemiology, which should be considered its main strength.

Conclusion

This study investigated the growing burden of injuries globally, which is reaching almost one-tenth of the total global burden of diseases and injuries. Among the various types of injuries, unintentional injuries were responsible for the greatest share of this burden, and also males were more susceptible to this burden globally. Regional variations in the burden of injuries still exist, but this burden is remarkable in all areas, with significant impacts in all dimensions. Appropriate data, besides decent policies, are the essential tools to address the global burden of injuries. What we presented in this study was an effort to help both these measures for the ultimate goal of an effective global injury prevention plan.

Author statements

Acknowledgments

The authors would like to thank the IHME for providing the best possible estimations of diseases, injuries, and risk factors epidemiology globally. Also, the authors sincerely thank all the collaborators who contributed to this study.

Ethical approval

None sought.

Funding

The GBD study is funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

Competing interests

S Afzal reports support for the present manuscript from the HEC Digital Library Pakistan; payment or honoraria for educational events from King Edward Medical University and collaborative

partners including Johns Hopkins University, University of California, and the University of Massachusetts; participation on a Data Safety Monitoring Board or Advisory Board with the National Bioethics Committee Pakistan, King Edward Medical University Institutional Ethical Review Board, and Ethical Review Board Fatima Jinnah Medical University and Sir Ganga Ram Hospital; leadership or fiduciary roles in board, society, committee or advocacy groups, paid or unpaid with the Pakistan Association of Medical Editors, Fellow of Faculty of Public Health Royal Colleges UK (FFPH), Society of Prevention, Advocacy and Research, King Edward Medical University (SPARK), and is a member of Pakistan Society of Infectious Diseases; S Afzal also serves as Dean of Public Health and Preventive Medicine King Edward Medical University, Chief Editor Annals of King Edward Medical University, Director of Quality Enhancement Cell, King Edward Medical University, and is a member of Research and Publications Higher Education Commission Pakistan, all outside the submitted work. H Amare holds stocks in Glaxo Smith Kline, payment made to them, outside the submitted work. M Asaad leadership or fiduciary roles in board, society, committee or advocacy groups, unpaid, with PRS Resident Advisor Board, outside the submitted work. T Astell-Burt reports grants or contracts from the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC), Australia, Australian Research Council (ARC), and Medical Research Future Fund (MFF); all outside the submitted work. S Barker-Collo reports payment or honoraria for lectures from Auckland University of Technology and support for attending meetings and/or travel from the University of Auckland Staff travel expenses allocation; all outside the submitted work. L Belo acknowledges the support from FCT in the scope of the project UIDP/04378/2020 and UIDB/04378/2020 of UCIBIO and the project LA/P/0140/2020 of i4HB, outside the submitted work. M Brauer reports support for the present manuscript from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and reports other grants from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation outside the submitted work, all payments made to their institution. A Briggs reports grants from AO Alliance, Asia Pacific League of Associations for Rheumatology, Australian Rheumatology Association, Pan American League of Associations for Rheumatology, World Federation of Chiropractic, Australian Government - Department of Health, Medical Research Future Fund, Western Australian Government Department of Health, Bone and Joint Decade Foundation (Sweden), Institute for Bone and Joint Research (Australia), Canadian Memorial Chiropractic College, Arthritis and Osteoporosis Western Australia, and Arthritis Australia, all payments paid to their institution; consulting fees from the World Health Organisation, One Space Health, and WorkSafe Victoria; honorarium for a presentation from the American College of Rheumatology and an honorarium from the Austrian Institute for Health Technology Assessment for independent review of policy documents; support for attending meetings and/or travel from the World Health Organisation, the University of Otago, and the World Federation of Chiropractic; all outside the submitted work. J Brown reports grants or contracts from the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC), Australia, Australian Research Council (ARC), and NSW Federal Government; all outside the submitted work. D Bryazka reports grants or contracts from Bloomberg Philanthropies, payments paid to their institution; outside the submitted work. M Carvalho acknowledges support from FCT/MCTES under the scope of the project UIDP/50006/2020 (DOI 10.54499/UIDP/50006/2020) and LAQV/REQUIMTE, University of Porto, outside the submitted work. D Christopher reports grants or contracts from the Department of Biotechnology, India; National Institutes of Health/National Institutes of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, USA; and the German Centre for Infection Research (DZIF), outside the submitted work. S R Clark reports grants from the Australian National Health and Medical Research Council, US

National Institute of Mental Health, and Wellcome Trust, Jassen-Cilag Australia; speaker honoraria from Lundbeck-Otsuka Australia; participation on advisory boards for Lundbeck Otsuka and Viatrix Australia; and receipt of medical writing from Lundbeck-Otsuka; all outside the submitted work. X Dai reports support for the present manuscript from the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation. K de Luca reports grants or contracts from Implementation of a Pathway of CarE for people with chronic musculoskeletal conditions living in RURAL and remote Australia using allied telehealth and is the chair for the World Federation of Chiropractic, Disability and Rehabilitation Committee; all outside the submitted work. A Demetriades is a non-fiduciary board member of the European Association of Neurosurgical Societies and a non-fiduciary board member for Global Neuro Foundation; all outside the submitted work. F Elgar reports support from Fulbright Canada, outside the submitted work. A Faro reports support for the present manuscript from the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development, CNPq, Brazil. X Feng reports grants or contracts from the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC), Australia, and Medical Research Future Fund (MFF); all outside the submitted work. R Franklin reports support for attending meetings and/or travel from ACTM for the Tropical Medicine and Travel Medicine Conference and ISTM for the Travel Medicine Conference; R Franklin is the president and director for Kidsafe, director for Auschem, director for Farmsafe, president elect for ACTM, is the convenor for PHAA Injury Prevention, and is on the governance committee for ISASH; all outside the submitted work. G F Gankpe reports a leadership role for the Beninese Society of Neurosurgery, outside the submitted work. J Glasbey reports grants or contracts from NIHR Academy, outside the submitted work. A H Hoveidaei reports consulting fees Avitus, BoneSupport, Johnson and Johnson, Orthofix, and reports that their employer consults for Link and Resolute Med and receives fellowship support from Biocomposites and BoneSupport; is an unpaid board member, research committee, IOA, a guest editor for *Frontiers in Sports and Active Living*, an editorial board member for *International Orthopaedics*, *Bone Reports*, *BMC Research Notes*, *PlosOne*, *Frontiers in Rehabilitation Sciences*, all unpaid; all outside the submitted work. N E Ismail reports unpaid leadership roles as the Bursar and Council Member, Malaysian Academy of Pharmacy and committee member for Educational Chapter of Malaysian Pharmacist Society; outside the submitted work. K Krishan acknowledges non-financial support from the UGC Centre of Advanced Study, CAS II, awarded to the Department of Anthropology, Panjab University, Chandigarh, India, outside the submitted work. V Lansingh reports support for attending meetings and/or travel from their employer, HelpMeSee, outside the submitted work. J Leadher reports leadership or fiduciary role in other board, society, committee or advocacy group, paid or unpaid, as a member of the National Eye Health Education Program Planning Group, National Eye Institute USA, outside the submitted work. E Mathews reports grants or contracts from Wellcome DBT India Alliance, grant number IA/CPHE/17/1/503345, outside the submitted work. A-F A Mentis reports grants or contracts from 'MilkSafe: A novel pipeline to enrich formula milk using omics technologies', a research co financed by the European Regional Development Fund of the European Union and Greek national funds through the Operational Program Competitiveness, Entrepreneurship and Innovation, under the call RESEARCH - CREATE - INNOVATE (project code: T2EDK-02222), as well as from ELIDEK (Hellenic Foundation for Research and Innovation, MIMS-860) (both outside of the present manuscript); payment or expert testimony as a peer-reviewer for *FONDAZIONE CARIPLO, ITALY*; Participation on a Data Safety Monitoring Board or Advisory Board as Editorial Board Member for "Systematic Reviews" journal, for "Annals of Epidemiology" journal, and as Associate Editor for

"Translational Psychiatry"; stock or stock options on a family winery; other financial interests as a scientific officer as part of the BGI Group; outside the submitted work. O Odukoya reports grants or contracts from Northwestern/Nigeria Research Training Program in HIV and Malignancies (NH-HAM) 2D43TW009575-11, outside the submitted work. A Peden reports support for the present manuscript from the National Health and Medical Research Council, Australia, grant number APP2009306. M R Phillips reports grants and contracts from the National Institute of Mental Health (MH108385 R01) and National Natural Science Foundation of China (NSFC, No. 81371502); outside the submitted work. L Ronfani reports support for the present manuscript from the Italian Ministry of Health (Ricerca Corrente 34/2017), payments made to the Institute for Maternal and Child Health IRCCS Burlo Garofolo. J Sanabria reports support for attending meetings and/or travel from Continuing Medical Education (CME) from Marshall University School of Medicine; three patents granted and two pending, zero royalties; all outside the submitted work. V Sharma reports support from DFSS (MHA)'s research project (DFSS28(1)2019/EMR/6) at Institute of Forensic Science & Criminology, Panjab University, Chandigarh, India, outside the submitted work. J A Singh reports consulting fees from ROMTech, Atheneum, Clearview Healthcare Partners, American College of Rheumatology, Yale University, Hulo, Horizon Pharmaceuticals, DINORA, ANI/Exeltis, USA Inc., Frictionless Solutions, Schipher, Crealta/Horizon, Medisys, Fidias, PK Med, Two Labs Inc., Adept Field Solutions, Clinical Care Options, Putnam Associates, Focus Forward, Navigant Consulting, Spherix, MediQ, Jupiter Life Science, UBM LLC, Trio Health, Medscape, WebMD, Practice Point Communications, and the National Institutes of Health (USA); payment or honoraria for speakers bureaus from Simply Speaking; past support for attending meetings and/or travel from OMERACT as a steering committee member; participation on a Data Safety Monitoring Board or Advisory Board (unpaid) with the Food and Drug Administration (USA) Arthritis Advisory Committee; leadership or fiduciary roles in other board, society, committee or advocacy groups with OMERACT as past steering committee member (paid), the Veterans Affairs Rheumatology Field Advisory Committee as Chair (unpaid), and the UAB Cochrane Musculoskeletal Group Satellite Center on Network Meta-analysis as Editor and Director (unpaid); stock or stock options in Atai Life Sciences, Kintara Therapeutics, Intelligent Biosolutions, Acumen Pharmaceutical, TPT Global Tech, Vaxart Pharmaceuticals, Atyu Biopharma, Adaptimmune Therapeutics, GeoVax Labs, Pieris Pharmaceuticals, Enzolytics Inc., Seres Therapeutics, Tonix Pharmaceuticals Holding Corp., Aebona Pharmaceuticals, Charlotte's Web Holdings, Inc., and previously owned stock options in Amarin, Viking, and Moderna Pharmaceuticals; all outside the submitted work. J Stanaway reports support for the present manuscript from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, payments made to their institution. D J Stein reports personal fees from Discovery Vitality, Johnson & Johnson, Kanna, L'Oreal, Lundbeck, Orion, Sanofi, Servier, Takeda and Vista-gen, outside the submitted work. M Strokes reports leadership or fiduciary role in other board, society, committee or advocacy group, paid or unpaid, with the International Society for Autism Research, Council of the Adged, Australasian Society for Autism Research, and the Child Accident Prevention Foundation (Kidsafe); all outside the submitted work. J H V Ticoalu reports leadership or fiduciary role in other board, society, committee or advocacy group, paid or unpaid, with Benang Merah Research Center, Indonesia, as co-founder, outside the submitted work. E Upadhyay reports published patents for a system and method of reusable filters for anti-pollution mask, a system and method for electricity generation through crop stubble by using microbial fuel cells, a system for disposed personal protection equipment (PPE) into biofuel through pyrolysis and method, a novel herbal pharmaceutical aid for formulation of gel

and method thereof, herbal drug formulation for treating lung tissue degenerated by particulate matter exposure, and a filed patent for a method to transform cow dung into the wall paint by using natural materials and composition thereof; leadership or fiduciary role in other board, society, committee or advocacy group, paid or unpaid, with the Indian Meteorological Society, Jaipur Chapter, as an executive council member and DSTPURSE Program as member secretary; all outside the submitted work.

Author contributions

Please see appendix 16 for more detailed information about individual author contributions to the research, divided into the following categories: managing the overall research enterprise; writing the first draft of the manuscript; primary responsibility for applying analytical methods to produce estimates; primary responsibility for seeking, cataloguing, extracting, or cleaning data; designing or coding figures and tables; providing data or critical feedback on data sources; developing methods or computational machinery; providing critical feedback on methods or results; drafting the manuscript or revising it critically for important intellectual content; and managing the estimation or publications process.

GBD 2019 Injuries Collaborators

Mohammad-Reza Malekpour,¹ Negar Rezaei,^{1,2} Sina Azadnadjafabad,^{1,3,4} Javad Khanali,^{1,5} Mohammadreza Azangou-Khyavy,^{1,5} Sahar Saeedi Moghaddam,^{1,6} Mahsa Heidari-Foroosan,^{1,7} Sahba Rezazadeh-Khadem,¹ Seyyed-Hadi Ghamari,^{1,5} Mohsen Abbasi-Kangevari,¹ Gdiom Gebreheat Abady,⁸ Rizwan Suliankatchi Abdulkader,⁹ Ayele Mamo Abebe,¹⁰ Prof Eman Abu-Gharbieh,^{11,12} Dilaram Acharya,^{13,14} Isaac Yeboah Addo,^{15,16} Oluwafemi Atanda Adeagbo,^{17,18} Prof Oyelola A Adegboye,¹⁹ Daniel Adedayo Adeyinka,^{20,21} Qorinah Estiningtyas Sakilah Adnani,²² Aanuoluwapo Adeyimika Afolabi,²³ Prof Saira Afzal,^{24,25} Muhammad Sohail Afzal,²⁶ Sajjad Ahmad,^{27,28} Aqeel Ahmad,²⁹ Ali Ahmadi,^{30,31} Hamid Ahmadi,^{32,33} Haroon Ahmed,³⁴ Mehrunnisha Sharif Ahmed,³⁵ Marjan Ajami,³⁶ Hossein Akbarialiabad,³⁷ Chisom Joyqueenet Akunna,^{38,39} Fares Alahdab,^{40,41} Fahad Mashhour Alanezi,⁴² Turki M Alanzi,⁴³ Robert Kaba Alhassan,⁴⁴ Liaqat Ali,⁴⁵ Shohreh Alian Samakkhah,⁴⁶ Yousef Alimohamadi,⁴⁷ Prof Syed Mohamed Aljunid,^{48,49} Sami Almustanyir,^{50,51} Salman Khalifah Al-Sabah,^{52,53} Khalid A Altirkawi,⁵⁴ Hiwot Amare,⁵⁵ Edward Kwabena Ameyaw,⁵⁶ Prof Tarek Tawfik Amin,⁵⁷ Sohrab Amirir,⁵⁸ Prof Tudorel Andrei,⁵⁹ Prof Catalina Liliana Andrei,⁶⁰ Davood Anvari,⁶¹ Sumadi Lukman Anwar,⁶² Muhammad Aqeel,⁶³ Morteza Arab-Zozani,⁶⁴ Ashokan Arumugam,^{65,66} Umesh Raj Aryal,⁶⁷ Malke Asaad,⁶⁸ Prof Saeed Asgary,^{69,70} Tahira Ashraf,⁷¹ Prof Thomas Astell-Burt,⁷² Seyyed Shamsadin Athari,⁷³ Alok Atreya,⁷⁴ Avinash Aujayeb,⁷⁵ Atalel Fentahun F Awedew,⁷⁶ Beatriz Paulina Ayala Quintanilla,^{77,78} Setognal Birara Aychiluhm,^{79,80} Alemu Degu Ayele,⁸¹ Hosein Azizi,^{82,83} Ahmed Y Azzam,^{84,85} Shankar M Bakkannavar,⁸⁶ Mainak Bardhan,⁸⁷ Prof Suzanne Lyn Barker-Collo,⁸⁸ Hiba Jawdat Barqawi,⁸⁹ Amadou Barrow,^{90,91} Azadeh Bashiri,⁹² Pritish Baskaran,⁹³ Saurav Basu,⁹⁴ Prof Neeraj Bedi,^{95,96} Alehegn Bekele,⁹⁷ Prof Luis Belo,^{98,99} Derrick A Bennett,¹⁰⁰ Isabela M Bensenor,¹⁰¹ Alemshet Yirga Berhie,¹⁰² Akshaya Srikanth Bhagavathula,^{103,104} Soumyadeep Bhaumik,¹⁰⁵ Prof Zulfikar A Bhutta,^{106,107} Prof Saeid Bitaraf,¹⁰⁸ Archith Bloor,¹⁰⁹ Prof Guilherme Borges,¹¹⁰ Rohan Borschmann,^{111,112} Soufiane Boufous,¹¹³ Prof Michael Brauer,^{114,115} Prof Andrew M Briggs,¹¹⁶ Julie Brown,^{117,118} Dana Bryazka,¹¹⁵ Prof Luis Alberto Cámara,^{119,120} Prof Rosario Cárdenas,¹²¹ Márcia Carvalho,^{122,123} Ferrán Catalá-López,^{124,125} Prof Ester Cerin,^{126,127} Jaykaran Charan,¹²⁸ Vijay Kumar Chattu,^{129,130} Prof Wai Tong Chien,¹³¹ Abdulaal Chitheer,¹³² Daniel

Youngwhan Cho,¹³³ Steffan Wittrup McPhee Christensen,^{134,135} Prof Devasahayam J Christopher,¹³⁶ Dinh-Toi Chu,^{137,138} Isaac Sunday Chukwu,¹³⁹ Beniamino Cislighi,¹⁴⁰ Prof Scott Richard Clark,¹⁴¹ Prof Natalia Cruz-Martins,^{142,143} Patricia Cullen,^{144,145} Omid Dadras,^{146,147} Xiaochen Dai,^{115,148} Giovanni Damiani,^{149,150} Prof Rakhi Dandona,^{151,152} Prof Gary L Darmstadt,¹⁵² Reza Darvishi Cheshmeh Soltani,¹⁵³ Aso Mohammad Darwesh,¹⁵⁴ Claudio Alberto Dávila-Cervantes,¹⁵⁵ Prof Diego De Leo,¹⁵⁶ Katie de Luca,¹⁵⁷ Andreas K Demetriades,^{158,159} Biniyam Demisse,¹⁶⁰ Fitsum Wolde Demisse,¹⁶¹ Solomon Demissie,¹⁶² Belay Desye,¹⁶³ Prof Samath Dhamminda Dharmaratne,^{164,148,115} Mengistie Diress,¹⁶⁵ Shirin Djalalinia,¹⁶⁶ Milad Dodangeh,¹⁶⁷ Deepa Dongarwar,¹⁶⁸ Hisham Atan Edinur,¹⁶⁹ Ebrahim Eini,¹⁷⁰ Michael Ekholuenetale,¹⁷¹ Prof Frank J Elgar,¹⁷² Islam Y Elgendy,^{173,174} Prof Hala Rashad Elhabashy,¹⁷⁵ Muhammed Elhadi,^{176,177} Waseem El-Huneidi,¹⁷⁸ Prof Mohammad Hassan Emamian,¹⁷⁹ Luchuo Engelbert Bain,¹⁸⁰ Daniel Berhanie Enyew,¹⁸¹ Habitu Birhan Eshetu,¹⁸² Sharareh Eskandari,¹⁸³ Farshid Etaee,¹⁸⁴ Adeniyi Francis Fagbamigbe,^{185,186} Andre Faro,¹⁸⁷ Abidemi Omolara Fasanmi,^{188,189} Ali Fatehizadeh,¹⁹⁰ Xiaoqi Feng,^{191,192} Seyed-Mohammad Fereshtehnejad,^{193,194} Pietro Ferrara,^{195,196} Getahun Fetensa,¹⁹⁷ Florian Fischer,¹⁹⁸ Prof Richard Charles Franklin,¹⁹⁹ Takeshi Fukumoto,²⁰⁰ Yaseen Galali,^{201,202} Nasrin Galehdar,²⁰³ Fortune Gbetoho Gankpe,^{204,205} Mesfin Gebrehiwot,²⁰⁶ Teferi Gebru Gebremeskel,^{207,208} Leta Adugna Geleta,²⁰⁹ Motuma Erena Getachew,^{210,211} Mansour Ghafourifard,²¹² Mohammad Ghasemi Nour,²¹³ Ahmad Ghashghaee,²¹⁴ Ali Gholamrezanezhad,²¹⁵ Tiffany K Gill,²¹⁶ Themba G Ginindza,²¹⁷ James C Glasbey,²¹⁸ Laszlo Göbölös,^{219,220} Kimiya Gohari,^{221,222} Prof Mahaveer Golechha,²²³ Pouya Goleji,^{224,225} Prof Michal Grivna,^{226,227} Damitha Asanga Gunawardane,²²⁸ Bhawna Gupta,²²⁹ Brian J Hall,²³⁰ Prof Randah R Hamadeh,²³¹ Pawan Kumar Hamal,^{232,233} Sajid Hameed,²³⁴ Prof Samer Hamidi,²³⁵ Mohammad Hamiduzzaman,²³⁶ Asif Hanif,²³⁷ Syed Emdadul Haque,²³⁸ Arief Hargono,²³⁹ Netanja I Harlianto,^{240,241} Risky Kusuma Hartono,²⁴² Ahmed I Hasaballah,²⁴³ Hamidreza Hasani,²⁴⁴ Prof Hossein Hassanian-Moghaddam,^{5,245} Soheil Hassanipour,^{246,247} Hadi Hassankhani,^{248,249} Khezar Hayat,^{250,251} Mohammad Heidari,²⁵² Delia Hendrie,²⁵³ Demisu Zenbaba Heyi,²⁵⁴ Yuta Hiraike,²⁵⁵ Nobuyuki Horita,^{256,257} Prof Mohammad Bellal Hossain,²⁵⁸ Prof Mehdi Hosseinzadeh,^{259,260} Amir Human Hoveidaei,²⁶¹ Prof Guoqing Hu,²⁶² Olayinka Stephen Ilesanmi,^{263,264} Mustapha Immurana,⁴⁴ Leeberk Raja Inbaraj,²⁶⁵ Sheikh Mohammed Shariful Islam,^{266,267} Rakibul M Islam,²⁶⁸ Prof Nahlah Elkudssiah Ismail,^{269,270} Jagnoor Jagnoor,²⁷¹ Haitham Jahrami,^{272,273} Prof Mihajlo Jakovljevic,^{274,275} Elham Jamshidi,²⁷⁶ Prof Manthan Dilipkumar Janodia,²⁷⁷ Tahereh Javaheri,²⁷⁸ Sathish Kumar Jayapal,²⁷⁹ Jayakumar Jeganathan,²⁸⁰ Prof Jost B Jones,^{281,282} Nitin Joseph,²⁸³ Farahnaz Joukar,^{246,247} Mikl Jürisson,²⁸⁴ Ali Kabir,²⁸⁵ Vidya Kadashetti,²⁸⁶ Rajesh Kamath,^{287,288} Ashwin Kamath,²⁸⁹ Bhushan Dattatray Kamble,^{290,291} Himel Kandel,^{292,293} Rami S Kantar,^{294,295} Ibraheem M Karaye,^{296,297} Samad Karkhah,²⁹⁸ Faizan Zaffar Kashoo,²⁹⁹ Bekalu Getnet Kassa,⁸¹ Prof Joonas H Kauppi,^{300,301} Leila Keikavoosi-Arani,³⁰² Phillip M Kemp Bohan,³⁰³ Mohammad Keykhaei,^{1,304} Nauman Khalid,³⁰⁵ Mohammad Khammarnia,³⁰⁶ Moien AB Khan,^{307,308} M Nuruzzaman Khan,^{309,310} Prof Ejaz Ahmad Khan,³¹¹ Maseer Khan,³¹² Prof Moawiah Mohammad Khatatbeh,³¹³ Jagdish Khubchandani,³¹⁴ Yun Jin Kim,³¹⁵ Gyu Ri Kim,³¹⁶ Prof Adnan Kisa,^{317,318} Sezer Kisa,³¹⁹ Prof Farzad Kompani,³²⁰ Prof Shivakumar KM Marulasiddaiah Kondalahalli,³²¹ Prof Parvaiz A Koul,³²² Ai Koyanagi,³²³ Prof Kewal Krishan,³²⁴ Vijay Krishnamoorthy,^{325,326} Estie Kruger,³²⁷ Burcu Kucuk Bicer,³²⁸ Nithin Kumar,³²⁹ Prof Narinder Kumar,³²⁹ Prof Carlo La Vecchia,³³⁰ Prof Hilton Lam,³³¹ Faris Hasan Lami,³³² Prof Iván Landires,^{333,334} Prof Van Charles Lansingh,^{335,336} Paolo Lauriola,³³⁷ Long Khanh Dao Le,³³⁸ Janet L Leasher,³³⁹ Prof Caterina Ledda,³⁴⁰ Doo Woong Lee,^{341,342} Prof Yo Han Lee,³⁴³ Wei-Chen Lee,³⁴⁴

- Andrew Tiyamike Makhiringa Likaka,³⁴⁵ Prof Stephen S Lim,^{115,148} Prof Shai Linn,³⁴⁶ Prof Giancarlo Lucchetti,³⁴⁷ Prof Raimundas Lunevicius,^{348,349} Prof Ronan A Lyons,³⁵⁰ Mohammed Magdy Abd El Razeq,³⁵¹ D. R. Mahadeshwara Prasad,^{352,353} Prof Razzagh Mahmoudi,³⁵⁴ Prof Azeem Majeed,³⁵⁵ Jeadran N Malagón-Rojas,^{356,357} Prof Elaheh Malakan Rad,³⁵⁸ Prof Deborah Carvalho Malta,³⁵⁹ Yosef Manla,³⁶⁰ Borhan Mansouri,³⁶¹ Mohammad Ali Mansournia,⁸³ Joemer C Maravilla,^{362,363} Elezebeth Mathews,³⁶⁴ Prof Pallab K Maulik,^{365,366} Prof Enkeleint A Mechili,^{367,368} Entezar Mehrabi Nasab,³⁶⁹ Walter Mendoza,³⁷⁰ Prof Dechasa Adare Mengistu,³⁷¹ Alexios-Fotios A Mentis,³⁷² Mohamed Kamal Mesregah,³⁷³ Tomislav Mestrovic,^{374,115} Prof Tomasz Miazgowski,³⁷⁵ Shabir Ahmad Mir,³⁷⁶ Andreea Mirica,⁵⁹ Prof Erkin M Mirrahimov,^{377,378} Moonis Mirza,³⁷⁹ Soheil Mohammadi,³⁸⁰ Prof Shafiu Mohammed,^{381,382} Modhurima Moitra,³⁸³ Prof Ali H Mokdad,^{115,148} Mariam Molokhia,³⁸⁴ Lorenzo Monasta,³⁸⁵ Maryam Moradi,³⁸⁶ Shane Douglas Morrison,³⁸⁷ Prof Sumaira Mubarik,^{388,389} Efrén Murillo-Zamora,^{390,391} Prof Ghulam Mustafa,^{392,393} Prof Ashraf Fawzy Nabhan,^{394,395} Vinay Nangia,³⁹⁶ Prof Bruno Ramos Nascimento,^{397,398} Zuhair S Natto,^{399,400} Ionut Negoi,^{401,402} Seyed Aria Nejadghaderi,^{403,1} Evangelia Nena,⁴⁰⁴ Samata Nepal,⁴⁰⁵ Prof Haruna Asura Nggada,^{406,407} Josephine W Ngunjiri,⁴⁰⁸ Chukwudi A Nnaji,^{409,410} Ogochukwu Janet Nzoputani,^{411,412} Chimezie Igwegbe Nzoputani,⁴¹³ Prof Bogdan Oancea,⁴¹⁴ Kehinde O Obamiro,⁴¹⁵ Oluwakemi Ololade Odokoya,^{416,417} Onome Bright Oghenetega,⁴¹⁸ Prof In-Hwan Oh,⁴¹⁹ Hassan Okati-Aliabad,³⁰⁶ Osaretin Christabel Okonji,⁴²⁰ Adeolu Olufunso Oladunjoye,^{421,422} Andrew T Olagunju,^{423,424} Diriba Dereje Olana,⁴²⁵ Ahmed Omar Bali,⁴²⁶ Adrian Otoi,⁵⁹ Prof Mayowa O Owolabi,^{427,428} Prof Mahesh Padukudru P A,⁴²⁹ Alicia Padron-Monedero,¹²⁴ Songhomitra Panda-Jonas,⁴³⁰ Prof Seithikurippu R Pandi-Perumal,^{431,432} Prof Shahina Pardhan,⁴³³ Prof Eun-Kee Park,⁴³⁴ Jay Patel,^{435,436} Uttam Paudel,^{437,438} Shrikant Pawar,⁴³⁹ Hamidreza Pazoki Toroudi,^{440,441} Amy E Peden,^{442,199} Paolo Pedersini,⁴⁴³ Prof Marcos Pereira,⁴⁴⁴ Prof Konrad Pesudovs,⁴⁴⁵ Ionela-Roxana Petcu,⁵⁹ Tom Pham,¹¹⁵ Prof Michael R Phillips,^{446,447} Zahra Zahid Piracha,⁴⁴⁸ Suzanne Polinder,⁴⁴⁹ Ibrahim Qattea,⁴⁵⁰ Ata Rafiee,⁴⁵¹ Prof Pankaja Raghav,⁴⁵² Prof Muhammad Aziz Rahman,^{453,454} Prof Mosiur Rahman,⁴⁵⁵ Amir Masoud Rahmani,⁴⁵⁶ Vahid Rahmani,⁴⁵⁷ Sheena Ramazan,^{458,459} Usha Rani,⁴⁶⁰ Temam Beshir Raru,⁴⁶¹ Mohammad-Mahdi Rashidi,^{1,5} Prof Prateek Rastogi,⁴⁶² Azad Rasul,⁴⁶³ Zubair Ahmed Ratan,^{464,465} Reza Rawassizadeh,⁴⁶⁶ Maryam Rezaei,⁴⁶⁷ Nazila Rezaei,¹ Prof Mohsen Rezaei,⁴⁶⁸ Muhammad Riaz,⁴⁶⁹ Jennifer Rickard,^{470,471} Nicholas L S Roberts,⁴⁷² Prof Jefferson Antonio Buendia Rodriguez,^{473,474} Prof Leonardo Roeber,^{475,476} Luca Ronfani,³⁸⁵ Bedanta Roy,⁴⁷⁷ Manjula S,⁴⁷⁸ Chandan S N,⁴⁷⁸ Prof Siamak Sabour,³¹ Prof Mohammad Reza Saeb,⁴⁷⁹ Prof Umar Saeed,^{480,481} Sare Safi,³² Prof Amirhossein Sahebkar,^{482,483} Biniyam Sahiledengle,⁴⁸⁴ Prof Mohammad Ali Sahraian,¹⁸³ Prof Payman Salamati,⁴⁸⁵ Prof Juan Sanabria,^{486,487} Muhammad Arif Nadeem Saqib,^{488,489} Yaser Sarikhani,^{490,491} Arash Sarveazad,⁴⁹² Davide Sattin,⁴⁹³ Ganesh Kumar Saya,⁴⁹⁴ David C Schwebel,⁴⁹⁵ Binyam Tariku Seboka,⁴⁹⁶ Abdul-Aziz Seidu,^{497,497} Allen Seylani,⁴⁹⁹ Pritik A Shah,⁵⁰⁰ Ataollah Shahbandi,³⁸⁰ Amira A Shaheen,⁵⁰¹ Masood Ali Shaikh,⁵⁰² Mohd Shanawaz,⁵⁰³ Ngussie Tadesse Sharew,^{504,505} Azam Sharifi,⁵⁰⁶ Neeraj Sharma,⁵⁰⁷ Vishal Sharma,⁵⁰⁸ Bereket Beyene Shashamo,¹⁶⁰ Ali Sheidaei,^{509,510} Rahim Ali Sheikh,⁵¹¹ Jiabin Shen,⁵¹² Adithi Shetty,⁵¹³ Prof B Suresh Kumar Shetty,⁴⁶² Rahman Shiri,⁵¹⁴ Seyed Afshin Shorofi,^{515,516} Roman Shrestha,¹⁸⁴ Negussie Boti Sidamo,⁵¹⁷ Prof Luís Manuel Lopes Rodrigues Silva,^{518,519} Wudneh Simegn,⁵²⁰ Prof Jasvinder A Singh,^{521,522} Surjit Singh,¹²⁸ Amrith Singh,⁵²³ Valentin Yurievich Skryabin,^{524,525} Anna Aleksandrovna Skryabina,⁵²⁶ Prof David A Sleet,^{527,528} Bogdan Socca,^{401,529} Yonatan Solomon,⁵³⁰ Yi Song,⁵³¹ Houman Sotoudeh,⁵³² Raul A R C Sousa,⁵³³ Jeffrey D Stanaway,^{115,148} Prof Dan J Stein,⁵³⁴ Paschalis Steiropoulos,⁴⁰⁴ Mark A Stokes,⁵³⁵ Narayan Subedi,^{536,537} Prof Jing Sun,^{80,538} Prof Rafael Tabarés-Seisdedos,^{539,540} Moslem Taheri Soodejani,⁵⁴¹ Mircea Tampa,^{542,543} Ker-Kan Tan,⁵⁴⁴ Md. Tariquijaman,⁵⁴⁵ Prof Elvis Enowbeyang Tankang,^{546,547} Nathan Y Tat,^{548,549} Yibekal Manaye Tefera,⁵⁵⁰ Rekha Thapar,²⁸³ Jansje Henny Vera Ticoalu,⁵⁵¹ Jaya Prasad Tripathy,⁵⁵² Lorraine Tudor Car,⁵⁵⁵ Derara Girma Tufa,⁵⁵³ Sana Ullah,^{554,555} Irfan Ullah,⁵⁵⁶ Krishna Kishore Umapathi,⁵⁵⁷ Era Upadhyay,⁵⁵⁸ Sahel Valadan Tahbaz,^{559,560} Prof Pascual R Valdez,^{561,562} Shoban Babu Varthya,¹²⁸ Prof Massimiliano Veroux,⁵⁶³ Dominique Vervoort,⁵⁶⁴ Prof Francesco S Violante,^{565,566} Prof Vasily Vlassov,⁵⁶⁷ Bay Vo,⁵⁶⁸ Prof Yasir Waheed,^{569,570} Prof Yanzhong Wang,⁵⁷¹ Gizachew Tadesse Wassie,⁵⁷² Taweewat Wiangkham,⁵⁷³ Caroline Wilkerson,¹¹⁵ Asrat Arja Wolde,^{574,115} Hong Xiao,^{575,576} Yuichiro Yano,⁵⁷⁷ Prof Sanni Yaya,⁵⁷⁸ Pengpeng Ye,^{579,105} Prof Paul Yip,^{580,581} Prof Naohiro Yonemoto,^{582,583} Prof Mustafa Z Younis,^{584,585} Prof Chuanhua Yu,³⁸⁹ Leila Zaki,⁵⁸⁶ Prof Michael Zastrozhin,^{587,588} Yunquan Zhang,^{589,590} Prof Zhi-Jiang Zhang,⁵⁹¹ Prof Sanjay Zodepey,⁵⁹² Prof Mohsen Naghavi,^{115,148} Prof Bagher Larijani,² Prof Farshad Farzadfar.¹

Affiliations

¹Non-communicable Diseases Research Center, Endocrinology and Metabolism Population Sciences Institute, Tehran University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Iran

²Endocrinology and Metabolism Research Institute, Tehran University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Iran

³Department of Surgery, Washington University in St. Louis, St. Louis, MO, USA

⁴Leeds Institute of Rheumatic and Musculoskeletal Medicine, University of Leeds, Leeds, UK

⁵Social Determinants of Health Research Center, Shahid Beheshti University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Iran

⁶Kiel Institute for the World Economy, Kiel, Germany

⁷School of Medicine, Shahid Beheshti University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Iran

⁸Department of Nursing, Adigrat University, Adigrat, Ethiopia

⁹National Institute of Epidemiology, Indian Council of Medical Research, Chennai, India

¹⁰Pediatrics Nursing Department, Debre Berhan University, Debre Berhan, Ethiopia

¹¹Department of Clinical Sciences, University of Sharjah, Sharjah, United Arab Emirates

¹²Department of Biopharmaceutics and Clinical Pharmacy, University of Jordan, Amman, Jordan

¹³School of Public Health, University of Montreal, Montreal, QC, Canada

¹⁴Department of Community Medicine, Kathmandu University, Devdaha, Nepal

¹⁵School of Medicine, University of Sydney, Sydney, NSW, Australia

¹⁶Centre for Social Research in Health, University of New South Wales, Sydney, NSW, Australia

¹⁷Department of Health Promotion, Education and Behavior, University of South Carolina, Columbia, SC, USA

¹⁸Department of Public Health, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban, South Africa

¹⁹Menzies School of Health Research, Charles Darwin University, Darwin, NT, Australia

²⁰Department of Community Health and Epidemiology, University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, SK, Canada

²¹Department of Public Health, Federal Ministry of Health, Abuja, Nigeria

²²Department of Public Health, Universitas Padjadjaran (Padjadjaran University), Bandung, Indonesia

- ²³Technical Services Directorate, MSI Nigeria Reproductive Choices, Abuja, Nigeria
- ²⁴Department of Community Medicine, King Edward Memorial Hospital, Lahore, Pakistan
- ²⁵Department of Public Health, Public Health Institute, Lahore, Pakistan
- ²⁶Department of Life Sciences, University of Management and Technology, Lahore, Pakistan
- ²⁷Department of Health and Biological Sciences, Abasyn University, Peshawar, Pakistan
- ²⁸Department of Natural Sciences, Lebanese American University, Beirut, Lebanon
- ²⁹Department of Medical Biochemistry, Shaqra University, Shaqra, Saudi Arabia
- ³⁰Department of Epidemiology and Biostatistics, Shahrekord University of Medical Sciences, Shahrekord, Iran
- ³¹Department of Epidemiology, Shahid Beheshti University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Iran
- ³²Ophthalmic Research Center, Shahid Beheshti University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Iran
- ³³Department of Ophthalmology, Shahid Beheshti University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Iran
- ³⁴Department of Biosciences, COMSATS Institute of Information Technology, Islamabad, Pakistan
- ³⁵College of Nursing, Majmaah University, Al Majmaah, Saudi Arabia
- ³⁶National Nutrition and Food Technology Research Institute, Shahid Beheshti University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Iran
- ³⁷St George and Sutherland Clinical School, University of New South Wales, Sydney, NSW, Australia
- ³⁸Department of Public Health, The Intercountry Centre for Oral Health (ICOH) for Africa, Jos, Nigeria
- ³⁹Department of Public Health, Federal Ministry of Health, Garki, Nigeria
- ⁴⁰Department of Biomedical Informatics, Biostatistics, and Epidemiology, University of Missouri, Columbia, MO, USA
- ⁴¹McWilliams School of Biomedical Informatics, University of Texas, Houston, TX, USA
- ⁴²Imam Abdulrahman Bin Faisal University, Dammam, Saudi Arabia
- ⁴³Department of Health Information Management and Technology, Imam Abdulrahman Bin Faisal University, Dammam, Saudi Arabia
- ⁴⁴Institute of Health Research, University of Health and Allied Sciences, Ho, Ghana
- ⁴⁵Department of Biological Sciences, National University of Medical Sciences (NUMS), Rawalpindi, Pakistan
- ⁴⁶Department of Food Hygiene, Amol University of Special Modern Technologies, Amol, Iran
- ⁴⁷Pars Advanced and Minimally Invasive Medical Manners Research Center, Iran University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Iran
- ⁴⁸Department of Public Health and Community Medicine, International Medical University, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
- ⁴⁹International Centre for Casemix and Clinical Coding, National University of Malaysia, Bandar Tun Razak, Malaysia
- ⁵⁰College of Medicine, Alfaisal University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia
- ⁵¹Ministry of Health, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia
- ⁵²Department of Surgery, Kuwait University, Kuwait, Kuwait
- ⁵³Jaber Al Ahmad Al Sabah Hospital, Ministry of Health, Kuwait, Kuwait
- ⁵⁴University of Sharjah, Sharjah, United Arab Emirates
- ⁵⁵Department of Internal Medicine, Jimma University, Jimma, Ethiopia
- ⁵⁶School of Graduate Studies, Lingnan University, Hong Kong, China
- ⁵⁷Public Health and Community Medicine Department, Cairo University, Cairo, Egypt
- ⁵⁸Quran and Hadith Research Center, Baqiyatallah University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Iran
- ⁵⁹Department of Statistics and Econometrics, Bucharest University of Economic Studies, Bucharest, Romania
- ⁶⁰Department of Cardiology, Carol Davila University of Medicine and Pharmacy, Bucharest, Romania
- ⁶¹Department of Parasitology, Iranshahr University of Medical Sciences, Iranshahr, Iran
- ⁶²Department of Surgery, Gadjah Mada University, Yogyakarta, Indonesia
- ⁶³Department of Psychology, Foundation University Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Pakistan
- ⁶⁴Social Determinants of Health Research Center, Birjand University of Medical Sciences, Birjand, Iran
- ⁶⁵Department of Physiotherapy, University of Sharjah, Sharjah, United Arab Emirates
- ⁶⁶Department of Physiotherapy, Manipal Academy of Higher Education, Manipal, India
- ⁶⁷Department of Research, Nepal Health Research Council, Kathmandu, Nepal
- ⁶⁸Department of Plastic Surgery, University of Texas, Houston, TX, USA
- ⁶⁹Research Institute of Dental Sciences, Shahid Beheshti University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Iran
- ⁷⁰National Agency for Strategic Research in Medical Education (SRME), Ministry of Health and Medical Education, Tehran, Iran
- ⁷¹University Institute of Radiological Sciences and Medical Imaging Technology, The University of Lahore, Lahore, Pakistan
- ⁷²School of Architecture, Design, and Planning, University of Sydney, Sydney, NSW, Australia
- ⁷³Department of Immunology, Zanjan University of Medical Sciences, Zanjan, Iran
- ⁷⁴Department of Forensic Medicine, Lumbini Medical College, Palpa, Nepal
- ⁷⁵Northumbria HealthCare NHS Foundation Trust, Newcastle upon Tyne, UK
- ⁷⁶Department of Surgery, Debre Tabor University, Debre Tabor, Ethiopia
- ⁷⁷The Judith Lumley Centre, La Trobe University, Melbourne, VIC, Australia
- ⁷⁸Universidad de San Martin de Porres, Lima, Peru
- ⁷⁹Institute of Public Health, University of Gondar, Gondar, Ethiopia
- ⁸⁰Rural Health Research Institute, Charles Sturt University, Orange, NSW, Australia
- ⁸¹Department of Midwifery, Debre Tabor University, Debre Tabor, Ethiopia
- ⁸²Research Center of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, Tabriz University of Medical Sciences, Tabriz, Iran
- ⁸³Department of Epidemiology and Biostatistics, Tehran University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Iran
- ⁸⁴Montefiore-Einstein Cerebrovascular Research Lab, Albert Einstein College of Medicine, Bronx, NY, USA
- ⁸⁵Faculty of Medicine, October 6 University, 6th of October City, Egypt
- ⁸⁶Department of Forensic Medicine and Toxicology, Manipal Academy of Higher Education, Manipal, India
- ⁸⁷Miller School of Medicine, University of Miami, Miami, FL, USA
- ⁸⁸School of Psychology, University of Auckland, Auckland, New Zealand
- ⁸⁹Clinical Sciences Department, University of Sharjah, Sharjah, United Arab Emirates

- ⁹⁰Department of Public and Environmental Health, University of The Gambia, Banjul, The Gambia
- ⁹¹Department of Epidemiology, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL, USA
- ⁹²Health Information Management, Shiraz University of Medical Sciences, Shiraz, Iran
- ⁹³Department of Community Medicine, Sri Manakula Vinayagar Medical College and Hospital, Puducherry, Puducherry, India
- ⁹⁴Department of Academics, Indian Institute of Public Health, Gurgaon, India
- ⁹⁵School of Public Health, Dr. D. Y. Patil University, Mumbai, India
- ⁹⁶Jazan University, Jazan, Saudi Arabia
- ⁹⁷Department of Medical Anatomy, Arba Minch University, Arba Minch, Ethiopia
- ⁹⁸Department of Biological Sciences, University of Porto, Porto, Portugal
- ⁹⁹Research Unit on Applied Molecular Biosciences (UCIBIO), University of Porto, Porto, Portugal
- ¹⁰⁰Nuffield Department of Population Health, University of Oxford, Oxford, UK
- ¹⁰¹Department of Internal Medicine, University of São Paulo, São Paulo, Brazil
- ¹⁰²School of Health Science, Bahir Dar University, Bahir Dar, Ethiopia
- ¹⁰³Department of Public Health, North Dakota State University, Fargo, ND, USA
- ¹⁰⁴Division of Gastroenterology and Hepatology, Mayo Clinic, Jacksonville, FL, USA
- ¹⁰⁵The George Institute for Global Health, University of New South Wales, Sydney, NSW, Australia
- ¹⁰⁶Centre for Global Child Health, University of Toronto, Toronto, ON, Canada
- ¹⁰⁷Centre of Excellence in Women & Child Health, Aga Khan University, Karachi, Pakistan
- ¹⁰⁸Department of Community Medicine, Ahvaz Jundishapur University of Medical Sciences, Ahvaz, Iran
- ¹⁰⁹Department of Internal Medicine, Manipal Academy of Higher Education, Mangalore, India
- ¹¹⁰Department of Epidemiology and Psychosocial Research, Ramón de la Fuente Muñiz National Institute of Psychiatry, Mexico City, Mexico
- ¹¹¹Justice Health Unit, University of Melbourne, Melbourne, VIC, Australia
- ¹¹²Centre for Adolescent Health, Murdoch Childrens Research Institute, Parkville, VIC, Australia
- ¹¹³Transport and Road Safety (TARS) Research Centre, University of New South Wales, Sydney, NSW, Australia
- ¹¹⁴School of Population and Public Health, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, BC, Canada
- ¹¹⁵Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation, University of Washington, Seattle, WA, USA
- ¹¹⁶School of Physiotherapy and Exercise Science, Curtin University, Perth, WA, Australia
- ¹¹⁷Department of Injury, The George Institute for Global Health, Newtown, NSW, Australia
- ¹¹⁸Faculty of Medicine, University of New South Wales, Kensington, NSW, Australia
- ¹¹⁹Department of Internal Medicine, Hospital Italiano de Buenos Aires, Buenos Aires, Argentina
- ¹²⁰Board of Directors, Argentine Society of Medicine, Buenos Aires, Argentina
- ¹²¹Department of Health Care, Metropolitan Autonomous University, Mexico City, Mexico
- ¹²²Faculty of Health Sciences, University Fernando Pessoa, Porto, Portugal
- ¹²³Associated Laboratory for Green Chemistry (LAQV), University of Porto, Porto, Portugal
- ¹²⁴National School of Public Health, Institute of Health Carlos III, Madrid, Spain
- ¹²⁵Center for Human and Social Sciences (CCHS-CSIC), National Research Council, Madrid, Spain
- ¹²⁶Mary MacKillop Institute for Health Research, Australian Catholic University, Melbourne, VIC, Australia
- ¹²⁷School of Public Health, University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong, China
- ¹²⁸Department of Pharmacology, All India Institute of Medical Sciences, Jodhpur, India
- ¹²⁹Temerty Faculty of Medicine, University of Toronto, Toronto, ON, Canada
- ¹³⁰Department of Community Medicine, Datta Meghe Institute of Medical Sciences, Sawangi, India
- ¹³¹The Nethersole School of Nursing, Faculty of Medicine, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong, China
- ¹³²Iraq Field Epidemiology Training Program (I-FETP), Ministry of Health, Baghdad, Iraq
- ¹³³Division of Plastic Surgery, University of Wisconsin, Madison, WI, USA
- ¹³⁴Department of Health Science and Technology, Aalborg University, Aalborg, Denmark
- ¹³⁵Department of Physiotherapy, University College of Northern Denmark, Aalborg, Denmark
- ¹³⁶Department of Pulmonary Medicine, Christian Medical College and Hospital (CMC), Vellore, India
- ¹³⁷The Interdisciplinary Research Group on Biomedicine and Health, VNU International School (VNUIS), Hanoi, Vietnam
- ¹³⁸Faculty of Applied Sciences, VNU International School (VNUIS), Hanoi, Vietnam
- ¹³⁹Department of Paediatric Surgery, Federal Medical Centre, Umuahia, Nigeria
- ¹⁴⁰Department of Global Health and Development, London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, London, UK
- ¹⁴¹Discipline of Psychiatry, University of Adelaide, Adelaide, SA, Australia
- ¹⁴²Department of Diagnostic and Therapeutic Technologies, Cooperativa de Ensino Superior Politécnico e Universitário (Polytechnic and University Higher Education Cooperative), Vila Nova de Famalicão, Portugal
- ¹⁴³Institute for Research and Innovation in Health (i3S), University of Porto, Porto, Portugal
- ¹⁴⁴School of Population Health, University of New South Wales, Kensington, NSW, Australia
- ¹⁴⁵Global Women's Health Program, The George Institute for Global Health, Newtown, NSW, Australia
- ¹⁴⁶Department of Global Public Health and Primary Care, University of Bergen, Bergen, Norway
- ¹⁴⁷Iranian Research Center for HIV/AIDS (IRCHA), Tehran University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Iran
- ¹⁴⁸Department of Health Metrics Sciences, School of Medicine, University of Washington, Seattle, WA, USA
- ¹⁴⁹IRCCS Istituto Ortopedico Galeazzi, University of Milan, Milan, Italy
- ¹⁵⁰Department of Dermatology, Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland, OH, USA
- ¹⁵¹Public Health Foundation of India, Gurugram, India
- ¹⁵²Department of Pediatrics, Stanford University School of Medicine, Stanford, CA, USA
- ¹⁵³Environmental Health, Arak University of Medical Sciences, Arak, Iran
- ¹⁵⁴Department of Information Technology, University of Human Development, Sulaymaniyah, Iraq

- ¹⁵⁵Department of Population and Development, Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences Mexico, Mexico City, Mexico
- ¹⁵⁶Australian Institute for Suicide Research and Prevention, Griffith University, Mount Gravatt, QLD, Australia
- ¹⁵⁷School of Health, Medical and Applied Sciences, CQUniversity, Brisbane, QLD, Australia
- ¹⁵⁸Department of Neurosurgery, University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh, UK
- ¹⁵⁹Department of Neurosurgery, National Health Service (NHS) Scotland, Edinburgh, UK
- ¹⁶⁰Department of Nursing, Arba Minch University, Arba Minch, Ethiopia
- ¹⁶¹Department of Midwifery, Arba Minch University, Arba Minch, Ethiopia
- ¹⁶²Department of Anatomy, Arba Minch University, Arba Minch, Ethiopia
- ¹⁶³Department of Environmental Health, Adigrat University, Dessie, Ethiopia
- ¹⁶⁴Department of Community Medicine, University of Peradeniya, Peradeniya, Sri Lanka
- ¹⁶⁵Department of Human Physiology, University of Gondar, Gondar, Ethiopia
- ¹⁶⁶Development of Research and Technology Center, Ministry of Health and Medical Education, Tehran, Iran
- ¹⁶⁷School of Medicine, Iran University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Iran
- ¹⁶⁸Health Science Center, University of Texas, Houston, TX, USA
- ¹⁶⁹School of Health Sciences, University of Science Malaysia, Kubang Kerian, Malaysia
- ¹⁷⁰Private Orthodontist, Ahvaz, Iran
- ¹⁷¹Faculty of Science and Health, University of Portsmouth, Hampshire, UK
- ¹⁷²School of Population and Global Health, McGill University, Montreal, QC, Canada
- ¹⁷³Division of Cardiovascular Medicine, University of Kentucky, Lexington, KY, USA
- ¹⁷⁴Division of Cardiology, Harvard University, Boston, MA, USA
- ¹⁷⁵Department of Neurophysiology, Cairo University, Cairo, Egypt
- ¹⁷⁶Faculty of Medicine, University of Tripoli, Tripoli, Libya
- ¹⁷⁷Houston Methodist Hospital, Houston, TX, USA
- ¹⁷⁸Department of Basic Medical Sciences, University of Sharjah, Sharjah, United Arab Emirates
- ¹⁷⁹Ophthalmic Epidemiology Research Center, Shahroud University of Medical Sciences, Shahroud, Iran
- ¹⁸⁰Lincoln International Institute for Rural Health, University of Lincoln, Lincoln, UK
- ¹⁸¹Department of Health Informatics, Haramaya University, Harar, Ethiopia
- ¹⁸²Department of Health Promotion and Health Behavior, University of Gondar, Gondar, Ethiopia
- ¹⁸³Multiple Sclerosis Research Center, Tehran University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Iran
- ¹⁸⁴Department of Internal Medicine, Yale University, New Haven, CT, USA
- ¹⁸⁵Department of Epidemiology and Medical Statistics, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria
- ¹⁸⁶Research Centre for Healthcare and Community, Coventry University, Coventry, UK
- ¹⁸⁷Department of Psychology, Federal University of Sergipe, São Cristóvão, Brazil
- ¹⁸⁸Satcher Health Leadership Institute, Morehouse School of Medicine, Atlanta, GA, USA
- ¹⁸⁹School of Medicine, Emory University, Atlanta, GA, USA
- ¹⁹⁰School of Engineering, Edith Cowan University, Joondalup, WA, Australia
- ¹⁹¹School of Population Health, University of New South Wales, Sydney, NSW, Australia
- ¹⁹²National Institute of Environmental Health, Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention, Beijing, China
- ¹⁹³Division of Neurology, University of Toronto, Toronto, ON, Canada
- ¹⁹⁴Department of Neurobiology, Care Sciences, and Society, Karolinska Institute, Stockholm, Sweden
- ¹⁹⁵Center for Public Health Research, University of Milan Bicocca, Monza, Italy
- ¹⁹⁶Laboratory of Public Health, IRCCS Istituto Auxologico Italiano, Milan, Italy
- ¹⁹⁷Department of Nursing, Wollega University, Nekemte, Ethiopia
- ¹⁹⁸Institute of Public Health, Charité Universitätsmedizin Berlin (Charité Medical University Berlin), Berlin, Germany
- ¹⁹⁹College of Public Health, Medical, and Veterinary Sciences, James Cook University, Townsville, QLD, Australia
- ²⁰⁰Department of Dermatology, Kobe University, Kobe, Japan
- ²⁰¹Department of Food Technology, Salahaddin University-Erbil, Erbil, Iraq
- ²⁰²Department of Nutrition and Dietetics, Cihan University-Erbil, Erbil, Iraq
- ²⁰³Faculty of Paramedicine, Lorestan University of Medical Sciences, Khorramabad, Iran
- ²⁰⁴Neurosurgery Department, Centre National Hospitalier Universitaire Hubert Maga (Hubert Maga National University Hospital Center), Cotonou, Benin
- ²⁰⁵Cotonou, Benin
- ²⁰⁶Department of Environmental Health, Wollo University, Dessie, Ethiopia
- ²⁰⁷Department of Reproductive and Family Health, Axum College of Health Science, Axum, Ethiopia
- ²⁰⁸College of Medicine and Public Health, Flinders University, Adelaide, SA, Australia
- ²⁰⁹Department of Public Health, Salale University, Fitcha, Ethiopia
- ²¹⁰Department of Public Health, Wollega University, Nekemte, Ethiopia
- ²¹¹Department of Public Health, Jimma University, Jimma, Ethiopia
- ²¹²Department of Medical Surgical-Nursing, Tabriz University of Medical Sciences, Tabriz, Iran
- ²¹³E-Learning Center, Mashhad University of Medical Sciences, Mashhad, Iran
- ²¹⁴School of Public Health, Qazvin University of Medical Sciences, Qazvin, Iran
- ²¹⁵Department of Radiology, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA, USA
- ²¹⁶Adelaide Medical School, University of Adelaide, Adelaide, SA, Australia
- ²¹⁷Discipline of Public Health Medicine, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban, South Africa
- ²¹⁸NIHR Global Health Research Unit on Global Surgery, University of Birmingham, Birmingham, UK
- ²¹⁹Department of Cardiac Surgery, Cleveland Clinic Abu Dhabi, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates
- ²²⁰Lerner College of Medicine, Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland, OH, USA
- ²²¹Biostatistics, Tarbiat Modares University, Tehran, Iran
- ²²²Quantitative department, Non-Communicable Diseases Research Center (NCDRC), Tehran, Iran
- ²²³Department of Health Systems and Policy Research, Indian Institute of Public Health, Gandhinagar, India
- ²²⁴Department of Genetics, Sana Institute of Higher Education, Sari, Iran

- ²²⁵Universal Scientific Education and Research Network (USERN), Kermanshah University of Medical Sciences, Kermanshah, Iran
- ²²⁶Institute of Public Health, United Arab Emirates University, Al Ain, United Arab Emirates
- ²²⁷Department of Public Health and Preventive Medicine, Charles University, Prague, Czech Republic
- ²²⁸Department of Community Medicine, University of Peradeniya, Kandy, Sri Lanka
- ²²⁹Department of Public Health, Torrens University Australia, Melbourne, VIC, Australia
- ²³⁰NYU Shanghai, Shanghai, China
- ²³¹Department of Family and Community Medicine, Arabian Gulf University, Manama, Bahrain
- ²³²Department of Anaesthesiology and Intensive care, National Academy of Medical Sciences, Kathmandu, Nepal
- ²³³Journal of Nepal Health Research Council, Nepal Health Research Council, Kathmandu, Nepal
- ²³⁴University Institute of Public Health, The University of Lahore, Lahore, Pakistan
- ²³⁵School of Health and Environmental Studies, Hamdan Bin Mohammed Smart University, Dubai, United Arab Emirates
- ²³⁶University Centre for Rural Health (Northern Rivers), University of Sydney, Lismore, NSW, Australia
- ²³⁷Sakarya University, Sakarya, Türkiye
- ²³⁸Research, UChicago Research Bangladesh, UChicago Research Bangladesh, Dhaka, Bangladesh
- ²³⁹Department of Epidemiology Population Biostatistics and Health Promotion, Universitas Airlangga (Airlangga University), Surabaya, Indonesia
- ²⁴⁰Faculty of Medicine, Utrecht University, Utrecht, Netherlands
- ²⁴¹Department of Radiology, University Medical Center Utrecht, Utrecht, Netherlands
- ²⁴²Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Kesehatan Indonesia Maju (Indonesian Advanced College of Health Sciences), Institution of Public Health Sciences, Jakarta, Indonesia
- ²⁴³Department of Zoology and Entomology, Al-Azhar University, Cairo, Egypt
- ²⁴⁴Department of Ophthalmology, Iran University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Iran
- ²⁴⁵Chapter of Addiction Medicine, University of Sydney, Sydney, NSW, Australia
- ²⁴⁶Gastrointestinal and Liver Diseases Research Center, Guilan University of Medical Sciences, Rasht, Iran
- ²⁴⁷Caspian Digestive Disease Research Center, Guilan University of Medical Sciences, Rasht, Iran
- ²⁴⁸School of Nursing and Midwifery, Tabriz University of Medical Sciences, Tabriz, Iran
- ²⁴⁹Independent Consultant, Tabriz, Iran
- ²⁵⁰Institute of Pharmaceutical Sciences, University of Veterinary and Animal Sciences, Lahore, Pakistan
- ²⁵¹Department of Pharmacy Administration and Clinical Pharmacy, Xian Jiaotong University, Xian, China
- ²⁵²Community-Oriented Nursing Midwifery Research Center, Shahrekord University of Medical Sciences, Shahrekord, Iran
- ²⁵³School of Public Health, Curtin University, Perth, WA, Australia
- ²⁵⁴Department of Public Health, Madda Walabu University, Robe, Ethiopia
- ²⁵⁵Graduate School of Medicine, University of Tokyo, Tokyo, Japan
- ²⁵⁶Department of Pulmonology, Yokohama City University, Yokohama, Japan
- ²⁵⁷National Human Genome Research Institute (NHGRI), National Institutes of Health, Bethesda, MD, USA
- ²⁵⁸Department of Population Sciences, University of Dhaka, Dhaka, Bangladesh
- ²⁵⁹School of Computer Science, Duy Tan University, Da Nang, Vietnam
- ²⁶⁰Mental Health Research Center, Iran University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Iran
- ²⁶¹Rubin Institute for Advanced Orthopedics, Sinai Hospital of Baltimore, Baltimore, MD, USA
- ²⁶²Department of Epidemiology and Health Statistics, Central South University, Changsha, China
- ²⁶³West Africa RCC, Africa Centre for Disease Control and Prevention, Abuja, Nigeria
- ²⁶⁴Department of Community Medicine, University College Hospital, Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria
- ²⁶⁵Department of Health Research, ICMR National Institute for Research in Tuberculosis, Chennai, India
- ²⁶⁶Institute for Physical Activity and Nutrition, Deakin University, Burwood, VIC, Australia
- ²⁶⁷Sydney Medical School, University of Sydney, Sydney, NSW, Australia
- ²⁶⁸Department of Epidemiology and Preventive Medicine, Monash University, Melbourne, VIC, Australia
- ²⁶⁹Department of Clinical Pharmacy & Pharmacy Practice, Asian Institute of Medicine, Science and Technology, Bedong, Malaysia
- ²⁷⁰Malaysian Academy of Pharmacy, Puchong, Malaysia
- ²⁷¹The George Institute for Global Health, University of New South Wales, New Delhi, India
- ²⁷²College of Medicine and Medical Sciences, Arabian Gulf University, Manama, Bahrain
- ²⁷³Ministry of Health, Manama, Bahrain
- ²⁷⁴The World Academy of Sciences UNESCO, Trieste, Italy
- ²⁷⁵Shaanxi University of Technology, Hanzhong, China
- ²⁷⁶Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, MD, USA
- ²⁷⁷School of Pharmaceutical Management, IIHMR University, Jaipur, India
- ²⁷⁸Health Informatic Lab, Boston University, Boston, MA, USA
- ²⁷⁹Centre of Studies and Research, Ministry of Health, Muscat, Oman
- ²⁸⁰Department of General Medicine, Manipal Academy of Higher Education, Mangalore, India
- ²⁸¹Rothschild Foundation Hospital, Institute of Molecular and Clinical Ophthalmology Basel, Paris, France
- ²⁸²Singapore Eye Research Institute, Singapore, Singapore
- ²⁸³Department of Community Medicine, Manipal Academy of Higher Education, Mangalore, India
- ²⁸⁴Institute of Family Medicine and Public Health, University of Tartu, Tartu, Estonia
- ²⁸⁵Minimally Invasive Surgery Research Center, Iran University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Iran
- ²⁸⁶Department of Oral and Maxillofacial Pathology, Krishna Vishwa Vidyapeeth (Deemed to be University), Karad, India
- ²⁸⁷Prasanna School of Public health, Manipal Academy of Higher Education, Manipal, India
- ²⁸⁸Care and Public Health Research Institute (CAPHRI), Maastricht University, Maastricht, Netherlands
- ²⁸⁹Kasturba Medical College, Mangalore, Manipal Academy of Higher Education, Manipal, India
- ²⁹⁰Department of Community Medicine and Family Medicine, All India Institute of Medical Sciences, Hyderabad, India
- ²⁹¹Department of Community Medicine, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi, India
- ²⁹²Save Sight Institute, University of Sydney, Sydney, NSW, Australia
- ²⁹³Sydney Eye Hospital, South Eastern Sydney Local Health District, Sydney, NSW, Australia

- ²⁹⁴The Hansjörg Wyss Department of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery, NYU Langone Health, New York, NY, USA
- ²⁹⁵Cleft Lip and Palate Surgery Division, Global Smile Foundation, Norwood, MA, USA
- ²⁹⁶School of Health Professions and Human Services, Hofstra University, Hempstead, NY, USA
- ²⁹⁷Department of Anesthesiology, Montefiore Medical Center, Bronx, NY, USA
- ²⁹⁸Department of Medical-Surgical Nursing, Guilan University of Medical Sciences, Rasht, Iran
- ²⁹⁹Department of Physical Therapy and Health Rehabilitation, Majmaah University, Majmaah, Saudi Arabia
- ³⁰⁰Surgery Research Unit, University of Oulu, Oulu, Finland
- ³⁰¹Department of Molecular Medicine and Surgery, Karolinska Institute, Stockholm, Sweden
- ³⁰²Department of Healthcare Services Management, Alborz University of Medical Sciences, Karaj, Iran
- ³⁰³Department of Surgery, Brooke Army Medical Center, Seattle, WA, USA
- ³⁰⁴Students' Scientific Research Center (SSRC), Tehran University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Iran
- ³⁰⁵College of Health Sciences, Abu Dhabi University, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates
- ³⁰⁶Health Promotion Research Center, Zahedan University of Medical Sciences, Zahedan, Iran
- ³⁰⁷Family Medicine Department, United Arab Emirates University, Al Ain, United Arab Emirates
- ³⁰⁸Primary Care Department, NHS North West London, London, UK
- ³⁰⁹Population Science Department, Jatiya Kabi Kazi Nazrul Islam University, Mymensingh, Bangladesh
- ³¹⁰Department of Public Health, University of Sydney, Sydney, NSW, Australia
- ³¹¹Department of Public Health, Health Services Academy, Islamabad, Pakistan
- ³¹²Department of Epidemiology, Jazan University, Jazan, Saudi Arabia
- ³¹³Department of Basic Medical Sciences, Yarmouk University, Irbid, Jordan
- ³¹⁴Department of Public Health, New Mexico State University, Las Cruces, NM, USA
- ³¹⁵School of Traditional Chinese Medicine, Xiamen University Malaysia, Sepang, Malaysia
- ³¹⁶Institute of Health Services Research, Yonsei University, Seoul, South Korea
- ³¹⁷School of Health Sciences, Kristiania University College, Oslo, Norway
- ³¹⁸Department of International Health and Sustainable Development, Tulane University, New Orleans, LA, USA
- ³¹⁹Department of Nursing and Health Promotion, Oslo Metropolitan University, Oslo, Norway
- ³²⁰Children's Medical Center, Tehran University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Iran
- ³²¹Department of Public Health Dentistry, Krishna Vishwa Vidyapeeth (Deemed to be University), Karad, India
- ³²²Department of Internal and Pulmonary Medicine, Sheri Kashmir Institute of Medical Sciences, Srinagar, India
- ³²³San Juan de Dios Sanitary Park, Barcelona, Spain
- ³²⁴Department of Anthropology, Panjab University, Chandigarh, India
- ³²⁵Department of Anesthesiology, Duke University, Durham, NC, USA
- ³²⁶Department of Anesthesiology & Pain Medicine, University of Washington, Seattle, WA, USA
- ³²⁷School of Human Sciences, The University of Western Australia, Perth, WA, Australia
- ³²⁸Faculty of Medicine, Gazi University, Ankara, Türkiye
- ³²⁹Department of Orthopaedics, Apollomedics Hospital, Lucknow, India
- ³³⁰Department of Clinical Sciences and Community Health, University of Milan, Milan, Italy
- ³³¹Institute of Health Policy and Development Studies, National Institutes of Health, Manila, Philippines
- ³³²Department of Community and Family Medicine, University of Baghdad, Baghdad, Iraq
- ³³³Unidad de Genética y Salud Pública, Instituto de Ciencias Médicas, Las Tablas, Panama
- ³³⁴Ministry of Health, Hospital Joaquín Pablo Franco Sayas, Las Tablas, Panama
- ³³⁵Chief Medical Office, HelpMeSee, New York, NY, USA
- ³³⁶Mexican Institute of Ophthalmology, Queretaro, Mexico
- ³³⁷International Society Doctors for the Environment, Arezzo, Italy
- ³³⁸Health Economics Division, Monash University, Burwood, VIC, Australia
- ³³⁹College of Optometry, Nova Southeastern University, Fort Lauderdale, FL, USA
- ³⁴⁰Department of Clinical and Experimental Medicine, University of Catania, Catania, Italy
- ³⁴¹Center for Global Health, Massachusetts General Hospital, Boston, MA, USA
- ³⁴²Harvard Medical School, Harvard University, Boston, MA, USA
- ³⁴³Department of Preventive Medicine, Korea University, Seoul, South Korea
- ³⁴⁴Department of Family Medicine, University of Texas Medical Branch, Galveston, TX, USA
- ³⁴⁵Directorate of Quality Management and Digital Health, Ministry of Health, Lilongwe, Malawi
- ³⁴⁶School of Public Health, Zefat Academic College, Haifa, Israel
- ³⁴⁷School of Medicine, Federal University of Juiz de Fora, Juiz de Fora, Brazil
- ³⁴⁸Department of Emergency General and Trauma Surgery, Liverpool University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, Liverpool, UK
- ³⁴⁹Department of Surgery, University of Liverpool, Liverpool, UK
- ³⁵⁰School of Medicine, Swansea University, Swansea, UK
- ³⁵¹Ophthalmology Department, Ministry of Health & Population, Aswan, Egypt
- ³⁵²Department of Forensic Medicine & Toxicology, Mysore Medical College & Research Institute, Mysore, India
- ³⁵³Department of Health & Family Welfare, Government of Karnataka, Bangalore, India
- ³⁵⁴Department of Food Hygiene and Safety, Qazvin University of Medical Sciences, Qazvin, Iran
- ³⁵⁵Department of Primary Care and Public Health, Imperial College London, London, UK
- ³⁵⁶Department of Public Health Research, National Institute of Health, Bogota, Colombia
- ³⁵⁷Faculty of Medicine, El Bosque University, Bogota, Colombia
- ³⁵⁸Department of Pediatric Cardiology, Tehran University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Iran
- ³⁵⁹Department of Maternal-Child Nursing and Public Health, Federal University of Minas Gerais, Belo Horizonte, Brazil
- ³⁶⁰Smidt Heart Institute, Cedars-Sinai Medical Center, Los Angeles, CA, USA
- ³⁶¹Substance Abuse Prevention Research Center, Kermanshah University of Medical Sciences, Kermanshah, Iran
- ³⁶²School of Public Health, The University of Queensland, Brisbane, QLD, Australia
- ³⁶³Manila, Philippines

- ³⁶⁴Department of Public Health and Community Medicine, Central University of Kerala, Kasaragod, India
- ³⁶⁵Research Division, The George Institute for Global Health, New Delhi, India
- ³⁶⁶School of Medicine, University of New South Wales, Sydney, NSW, Australia
- ³⁶⁷Department of Healthcare, University of Vlora, Vlora City, Albania
- ³⁶⁸Clinic of Social and Family Medicine, University of Crete, Heraklion, Greece
- ³⁶⁹Tehran Heart Center, Tehran University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Iran
- ³⁷⁰Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos, Lima, Peru
- ³⁷¹Department of Environmental Health Science, Haramaya University, Harar City, Ethiopia
- ³⁷²International Dx Department, BGI Genomics, Copenhagen, Denmark
- ³⁷³Faculty of Medicine, Menoufia University, Shebin El-Kom, Egypt
- ³⁷⁴University Centre Varazdin, University North, Varazdin, Croatia
- ³⁷⁵Department of Propedeutics of Internal Diseases & Arterial Hypertension, Pomeranian Medical University, Szczecin, Poland
- ³⁷⁶College of Applied Medical Sciences, Majmaah University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia
- ³⁷⁷Internal Medicine Programme, Kyrgyz State Medical Academy, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan
- ³⁷⁸Department of Atherosclerosis and Coronary Heart Disease, National Center of Cardiology and Internal Disease, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan
- ³⁷⁹Department of Hospital Administration, All India Institute of Medical Sciences, Bathinda, India
- ³⁸⁰School of Medicine, Tehran University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Iran
- ³⁸¹Health Systems and Policy Research Unit, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Nigeria
- ³⁸²Heidelberg Institute of Global Health (HIGH), Heidelberg University, Heidelberg, Germany
- ³⁸³Department of Global Health, University of Washington, Seattle, WA, USA
- ³⁸⁴Faculty of Life Sciences and Medicine, King's College London, London, UK
- ³⁸⁵Clinical Epidemiology and Public Health Research Unit, Burlo Garofolo Institute for Maternal and Child Health, Trieste, Italy
- ³⁸⁶Iran University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Iran
- ³⁸⁷Division of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery, University of Washington Medical Center, Seattle, WA, USA
- ³⁸⁸Unit of Pharmacotherapy, Epidemiology and Economics, University of Groningen (Rijksuniversiteit Groningen), Groningen, Netherlands
- ³⁸⁹Department of Epidemiology and Biostatistics, Wuhan University, Wuhan, China
- ³⁹⁰Clinical Epidemiology Research Unit, Mexican Institute of Social Security, Villa de Alvarez, Mexico
- ³⁹¹Postgraduate in Medical Sciences, Universidad de Colima, Colima, Mexico
- ³⁹²College of Medicine, Shaqra University, Shaqra, Saudi Arabia
- ³⁹³Department of Pediatrics & Pediatric Pulmonology, Institute of Mother & Child Care, Multan, Pakistan
- ³⁹⁴Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, Ain Shams University, Cairo, Egypt
- ³⁹⁵Department of Knowledge Translation and Utilization, Egyptian Center for Evidence Based Medicine, Cairo, Egypt
- ³⁹⁶Suraj Eye Institute, Nagpur, India
- ³⁹⁷Department of Clinical Medicine, Federal University of Minas Gerais, Belo Horizonte, Brazil
- ³⁹⁸Clinical Hospital, Federal University of Minas Gerais, Belo Horizonte, Brazil
- ³⁹⁹Department of Dental Public Health, King Abdulaziz University, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia
- ⁴⁰⁰Department of Health Policy and Oral Epidemiology, Harvard University, Boston, MA, USA
- ⁴⁰¹Department of General Surgery, Carol Davila University of Medicine and Pharmacy, Bucharest, Romania
- ⁴⁰²Department of General Surgery, Emergency University Hospital Bucharest, Bucharest, Romania
- ⁴⁰³HIV/STI Surveillance Research Center, Kerman University of Medical Sciences, Kerman, Iran
- ⁴⁰⁴Department of Medicine, Democritus University of Thrace, Alexandroupolis, Greece
- ⁴⁰⁵Department of Community Medicine, Lumbini Medical College, Palpa, Nepal
- ⁴⁰⁶Department of Histopathology, University of Maiduguri Teaching Hospital, Maiduguri, Nigeria
- ⁴⁰⁷Department of Human Pathology, University of Maiduguri, Maiduguri, Nigeria
- ⁴⁰⁸Department of Biological Sciences, University of Embu, Embu, Kenya
- ⁴⁰⁹Technical Department, University of Cape Town, Cape Town, South Africa
- ⁴¹⁰School of Public Health and Family Medicine, University of Cape Town, Cape Town, South Africa
- ⁴¹¹Department of Physiology, University of Benin, Edo, Nigeria
- ⁴¹²Department of Physiology, Benson Idahosa University, Benin City, Nigeria
- ⁴¹³Center of Excellence in Reproductive Health Innovation (CERHI), University of Benin, Benin City, Nigeria
- ⁴¹⁴Department of Applied Economics and Quantitative Analysis, University of Bucharest, Bucharest, Romania
- ⁴¹⁵James Cook University, Townsville, QLD, Australia
- ⁴¹⁶Department of Community Health and Primary Care, University of Lagos, Idi Araba, Nigeria
- ⁴¹⁷Department of Family and Preventive Medicine, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, UT, USA
- ⁴¹⁸Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria
- ⁴¹⁹Department of Preventive Medicine, Kyung Hee University, Seoul, South Korea
- ⁴²⁰School of Pharmacy, University of the Western Cape, Cape Town, South Africa
- ⁴²¹Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, Baylor College of Medicine, Houston, FL, USA
- ⁴²²Medicine Critical Care, Boston Children's Hospital, Boston, USA
- ⁴²³Department of Psychiatry and Behavioural Neurosciences, McMaster University, Hamilton, ON, Canada
- ⁴²⁴Department of Psychiatry, University of Lagos, Lagos, Nigeria
- ⁴²⁵Department of Biomedical Sciences, Jimma University, Jimma, Ethiopia
- ⁴²⁶Diplomacy and Public Relations Department, University of Human Development, Sulaymaniyah, Iraq
- ⁴²⁷Department of Medicine, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria
- ⁴²⁸Department of Medicine, University College Hospital, Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria
- ⁴²⁹Department of Respiratory Medicine, Jagadguru Sri Shivarathreeswara University, Mysore, India
- ⁴³⁰Department of Ophthalmology, Heidelberg University, Heidelberg, Germany
- ⁴³¹Centre for Research and Development, Chandigarh University, Punjab, India

- ⁴³²Division of Research and Development, Lovely Professional University, Phagwara, India
- ⁴³³Vision and Eye Research Institute, Anglia Ruskin University, Cambridge, UK
- ⁴³⁴Department of Medical Humanities and Social Medicine, Kosin University, Busan, South Korea
- ⁴³⁵Global Health Governance Programme, University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh, UK
- ⁴³⁶School of Dentistry, University of Leeds, Leeds, UK
- ⁴³⁷Research Department, Nepal Health Research Council, Kathmandu, Nepal
- ⁴³⁸Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu, Nepal
- ⁴³⁹Department of Genetics, Yale University, New Haven, CT, USA
- ⁴⁴⁰Physiology Research Center, Iran University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Iran
- ⁴⁴¹Department of Physiology, Iran University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Iran
- ⁴⁴²School of Public Health and Community Medicine, University of New South Wales, Sydney, NSW, Australia
- ⁴⁴³Clinical Research Department, IRCCS Fondazione Don Carlo Gnocchi, Milan, Italy
- ⁴⁴⁴Institute of Collective Health, Federal University of Bahia, Salvador, Brazil
- ⁴⁴⁵School of Optometry and Vision Science, University of New South Wales, Sydney, NSW, Australia
- ⁴⁴⁶Shanghai Mental Health Center, Shanghai Jiao Tong University, Shanghai, China
- ⁴⁴⁷Departments of Psychiatry and Epidemiology, Columbia University, New York, NY, USA
- ⁴⁴⁸International Center of Medical Sciences Research, Islamabad, Pakistan
- ⁴⁴⁹Department of Public Health, Erasmus University Medical Center, Rotterdam, Netherlands
- ⁴⁵⁰Department of Neonatology, Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland, OH, USA
- ⁴⁵¹Department of Medicine, University of Alberta, Edmonton, AB, Canada
- ⁴⁵²Department of Community Medicine and Family Medicine, All India Institute of Medical Sciences, Jodhpur, India
- ⁴⁵³Institute of Health and Wellbeing, Federation University Australia, Berwick, VIC, Australia
- ⁴⁵⁴School of Nursing and Midwifery, La Trobe University, Melbourne, VIC, Australia
- ⁴⁵⁵Department of Population Science and Human Resource Development, University of Rajshahi, Rajshahi, Bangladesh
- ⁴⁵⁶Future Technology Research Center, National Yunlin University of Science and Technology, Yunlin, Taiwan
- ⁴⁵⁷Department of Public Health, Torbat Jam Faculty of Medical Sciences, Torbat Jam, Iran
- ⁴⁵⁸School of Nursing & Health Sciences, Hong Kong Metropolitan University, Hong Kong, China
- ⁴⁵⁹Saw Swee Hock School of Public Health, National University of Singapore, Singapore, Singapore
- ⁴⁶⁰Department of Health Innovation, Manipal Academy of Higher Education, Udupi, India
- ⁴⁶¹College of Health and Medical Sciences, Haramaya University, Harar, Ethiopia
- ⁴⁶²Department of Forensic Medicine and Toxicology, Manipal Academy of Higher Education, Mangalore, India
- ⁴⁶³Department of Geography, Soran University, Soran, Iraq
- ⁴⁶⁴Department of Biomedical Engineering, Khulna University of Engineering and Technology, Khulna, Bangladesh
- ⁴⁶⁵School of Health and Society, University of Wollongong, Wollongong, NSW, Australia
- ⁴⁶⁶Department of Computer Science, Boston University, Boston, MA, USA
- ⁴⁶⁷Medical Toxicology & Drug Abuse Research Center, Birjand University of Medical Sciences, Birjand, Iran
- ⁴⁶⁸Department of Epidemiology and Biostatistics, Rafsanjan University of Medical Sciences, Rafsanjan, Iran
- ⁴⁶⁹Department of Pharmacy, Shaheed Benazir Bhutto University Sheringal Pakistan, Dir Upper, Pakistan
- ⁴⁷⁰Department of Surgery, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN, USA
- ⁴⁷¹Department of Surgery, University Teaching Hospital of Kigali, Kigali, Rwanda
- ⁴⁷²Department of Medicine, Weill Cornell Medical College, New York, NY, USA
- ⁴⁷³Department of Pharmacology and Toxicology, University of Antioquia, Medellin, Colombia
- ⁴⁷⁴Warwick Medical School, University of Warwick, Coventry, UK
- ⁴⁷⁵Department of Clinical Research, University of Sao Paulo, Ribeirão Preto, Brazil
- ⁴⁷⁶Gilbert and Rose-Marie Chagoury School of Medicine, Lebanese American University, Beirut, Lebanon
- ⁴⁷⁷Faculty of Medicine, Quest International University Perak, Ipoh, Malaysia
- ⁴⁷⁸Department of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery, Jagadguru Sri Shivarathreeswara University, Mysore, India
- ⁴⁷⁹Department of Pharmaceutical Chemistry, International Medical University, Gdańsk, Poland
- ⁴⁸⁰Clinical and Biomedical Research Center, Foundation University Islamabad, Islamabad, Pakistan
- ⁴⁸¹International Center of Medical Sciences Research (ICMSR), Islamabad, Pakistan
- ⁴⁸²Center for Global Health Research, Saveetha University, Chennai, India
- ⁴⁸³Biotechnology Research Center, Mashhad University of Medical Sciences, Mashhad, Iran
- ⁴⁸⁴Department of Public Health, Madda Walabu University, Bale Robe, Ethiopia
- ⁴⁸⁵Sina Trauma and Surgery Research Center, Tehran University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Iran
- ⁴⁸⁶Department of Surgery, Marshall University, Huntington, WV, USA
- ⁴⁸⁷Department of Nutrition and Preventive Medicine, Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland, OH, USA
- ⁴⁸⁸Research Development Coordination Section, Pakistan Health Research Council, Islamabad, Pakistan
- ⁴⁸⁹School of Sciences, University of Management and Technology, Lahore, Pakistan
- ⁴⁹⁰Department of Public Health, Jahrom University of Medical Sciences, Jahrom, Iran
- ⁴⁹¹Health Policy Research Center, Shiraz University of Medical Sciences, Shiraz, Iran
- ⁴⁹²Colorectal Research Center, Iran University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Iran
- ⁴⁹³IRCCS Istituti Clinici Scientifici Maugeri (IRCCS Maugeri Scientific Clinical Institute), Milan, Italy
- ⁴⁹⁴Department of Preventive and Social Medicine, Jawaharlal Institute of Postgraduate Medical Education and Research, Puducherry, India
- ⁴⁹⁵Department of Psychology, University of Alabama at Birmingham, Birmingham, AL, USA
- ⁴⁹⁶School of public health, Dilla University, Dilla, Ethiopia

- ⁴⁹⁷Division of Public Health & Tropical Medicine, James Cook University, Townsville, QLD, Australia
- ⁴⁹⁸College of Public Health, Medical and Veterinary Sciences, James Cook University, Townsville, QLD, Australia
- ⁴⁹⁹National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, National Institute of Health, Rockville, MD, USA
- ⁵⁰⁰Department of Microbiology, Rajiv Gandhi University of Health Sciences, Bangalore, India
- ⁵⁰¹Public Health Division, An-Najah National University, Nablus, Palestine
- ⁵⁰²Independent Consultant, Karachi, Pakistan
- ⁵⁰³College of Nursing and Health Sciences, Jazan University, Jazan, Saudi Arabia
- ⁵⁰⁴Department of Nursing, Debre Berhan University, Debre Berhan, Ethiopia
- ⁵⁰⁵Interdisciplinary Center Psychopathology and Emotion Regulation (ICPE), University of Groningen, Groningen, Netherlands
- ⁵⁰⁶Nahavand School of Allied Medical Sciences, Hamadan University of Medical Sciences, Hamadan, Nahavand, Iran
- ⁵⁰⁷Implementation Science, Society for Applied Studies, New Delhi, India
- ⁵⁰⁸Institute of Forensic Science & Criminology, Panjab University, Chandigarh, India
- ⁵⁰⁹School of Public Health, Tehran University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Iran
- ⁵¹⁰Quantitative Department, Non-Communicable Diseases Research Center (NCDRC), Tehran, Iran
- ⁵¹¹Department of Health in Disasters and Emergencies, Shahrekord University of Medical Sciences, Shahrekord, Iran
- ⁵¹²Psychology Department, University of Massachusetts Lowell, Boston, MA, USA
- ⁵¹³Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, Manipal Academy of Higher Education, Mangalore, India
- ⁵¹⁴Finnish Institute of Occupational Health, Helsinki, Finland
- ⁵¹⁵Department of Medical-Surgical Nursing, Mazandaran University of Medical Sciences, Sari, Iran
- ⁵¹⁶Department of Nursing and Health Sciences, Flinders University, Adelaide, SA, Australia
- ⁵¹⁷School of Public Health, Arba Minch University, Arba Minch, Ethiopia
- ⁵¹⁸Sport Physical Activity and Health Research & Innovation Center (SPRINT), Polytechnic Institute of Guarda, Guarda, Portugal
- ⁵¹⁹CICS-UBI Health Sciences Research Center, University of Beira Interior, Covilhã, Portugal
- ⁵²⁰Social and Administrative Pharmacy, University of Gondar, Gondar, Ethiopia
- ⁵²¹School of Medicine, Baylor College of Medicine, Houston, TX, USA
- ⁵²²Department of Medicine Service, US Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), Houston, TX, USA
- ⁵²³Menzies Institute for Medical Research, University of Tasmania, Hobart, TAS, Australia
- ⁵²⁴Clinical Branch, Moscow Research and Practical Centre on Addictions, Moscow, Russia
- ⁵²⁵Addiction Psychiatry Department, Russian Medical Academy of Continuous Professional Education, Moscow, Russia
- ⁵²⁶Department of Infectious Diseases and Epidemiology, Pirogov Russian National Research Medical University, Moscow, Russia
- ⁵²⁷Division of Injury Prevention, The Bizzell Group, Atlanta, GA, USA
- ⁵²⁸Rollins School of Public Health, Emory University, Atlanta, GA, USA
- ⁵²⁹Department of Surgery, "Sf. Pantelimon" Emergency Clinical Hospital Bucharest, Bucharest, Romania
- ⁵³⁰Department of Nursing, Dire Dawa University, Dire Dawa, Ethiopia
- ⁵³¹Institute of Child and Adolescent Health, Peking University, Beijing, China
- ⁵³²Department of Radiology, University of Alabama at Birmingham, Birmingham, AL, USA
- ⁵³³Directive Board, Associação de Profissionais Licenciados de Optometria (Association of Licensed Optometry Professionals), Porto, Portugal
- ⁵³⁴SAMRC Unit on Risk and Resilience in Mental Disorders, University of Cape Town, Cape Town, South Africa
- ⁵³⁵Department of Psychology, Deakin University, Burwood, VIC, Australia
- ⁵³⁶Central Department of Public Health, Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu, Nepal
- ⁵³⁷School of Exercise and Nutrition Sciences, Deakin University, Melbourne, VIC, Australia
- ⁵³⁸Institute of Integrated Intelligence and Systems, Griffith University, Brisbane, QLD, Australia
- ⁵³⁹Department of Medicine, University of Valencia, Valencia, Spain
- ⁵⁴⁰Carlos III Health Institute, Biomedical Research Networking Center for Mental Health Network (CiberSAM), Madrid, Spain
- ⁵⁴¹Department of Biostatistics and Epidemiology, Shahid Sadooghi University of Medical Sciences, Yazd, Iran
- ⁵⁴²Department of Dermatology, Carol Davila University of Medicine and Pharmacy, Bucharest, Romania
- ⁵⁴³Department of Dermato-Venereology, Dr. Victor Babes Clinical Hospital of Infectious Diseases and Tropical Diseases, Bucharest, Romania
- ⁵⁴⁴Department of Surgery, National University of Singapore, Singapore, Singapore
- ⁵⁴⁵Nutrition and Clinical Services Division, International Centre for Diarrhoeal Disease Research, Bangladesh, Dhaka, Bangladesh
- ⁵⁴⁶Department of Population and Behavioural Sciences, University of Health and Allied Sciences, Ho, Ghana
- ⁵⁴⁷School of Nursing and Public Health, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban, South Africa
- ⁵⁴⁸Department of Economics, Rice University, Houston, TX, USA
- ⁵⁴⁹Department of Research and Innovation, Enventure Medical Innovation, Houston, TX, USA
- ⁵⁵⁰Department of Public Health, Dire Dawa University, Dire Dawa, Ethiopia
- ⁵⁵¹Faculty of Public Health, Universitas Sam Ratulangi (Sam Ratulangi University), Manado, Indonesia
- ⁵⁵²Department of Community Medicine and Family Medicine, All India Institute of Medical Sciences, Nagpur, India
- ⁵⁵³Public Health Department, Salale University, Fiche, Ethiopia
- ⁵⁵⁴Department of Zoology, University of Education Lahore, Lahore, Pakistan
- ⁵⁵⁵Division of Science and Technology, University of Education Lahore, Lahore, Pakistan
- ⁵⁵⁶Department of Allied Health Sciences, Iqra University Chak Shahzad Campus, Islamabad, Pakistan
- ⁵⁵⁷Department of Pediatric Cardiology, Rush University, Chicago, IL, USA
- ⁵⁵⁸Amity Institute of Biotechnology, Amity University Rajasthan, Jaipur, India
- ⁵⁵⁹Clinical Cancer Research Center, Milad General Hospital, Tehran, Iran
- ⁵⁶⁰Department of Microbiology, Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran
- ⁵⁶¹Argentine Society of Medicine, Buenos Aires, Argentina
- ⁵⁶²Velez Sarsfield Hospital, Buenos Aires, Argentina

- ⁵⁶³Department of Medical and Surgical Sciences and Advanced Technologies "GF Ingrassia", University of Catania, Catania, Italy
- ⁵⁶⁴Department of Health Policy and Management, Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, MD, USA
- ⁵⁶⁵Department of Medical and Surgical Sciences, University of Bologna, Bologna, Italy
- ⁵⁶⁶Occupational Medicine Unit, Sant'Orsola Malpighi Hospital, Bologna, Italy
- ⁵⁶⁷Department of Health Care Administration and Economics, National Research University Higher School of Economics, Moscow, Russia
- ⁵⁶⁸Faculty of Information Technology, HUTECH University, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam
- ⁵⁶⁹NUST School of Health Sciences, National University of Sciences and Technology (NUST), Islamabad, Pakistan
- ⁵⁷⁰Operational Research Center in Healthcare, Near East University, Nicosia, Türkiye
- ⁵⁷¹School of Life Course and Population Sciences, King's College London, London, UK
- ⁵⁷²Department of Epidemiology and Biostatistics, Bahir Dar University, Bahir Dar, Ethiopia
- ⁵⁷³Department of Physical Therapy, Naresuan University, Phitsanulok, Thailand
- ⁵⁷⁴National Data Management Center for Health (NDMC), Ethiopian Public Health Institute, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
- ⁵⁷⁵School of Public Health, Zhejiang University, Zhejiang, China
- ⁵⁷⁶Department of Public Health Science, Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center, Seattle, WA, USA
- ⁵⁷⁷Faculty of Medicine, Juntendo University, Tokyo, Japan
- ⁵⁷⁸The George Institute for Global Health, Imperial College London, London, UK
- ⁵⁷⁹National Center for Chronic and Noncommunicable Disease Control and Prevention, Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention, Beijing, China
- ⁵⁸⁰Centre for Suicide Research and Prevention, University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong, China
- ⁵⁸¹Department of Social Work and Social Administration, University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong, China
- ⁵⁸²Department of Biostatistics, University of Toyama, Toyama, Japan
- ⁵⁸³Department of Public Health, Juntendo University, Tokyo, Japan
- ⁵⁸⁴Department of Health Policy and Management, Jackson State University, Jackson, MS, USA
- ⁵⁸⁵School of Business & Economics, Universiti Putra Malaysia (University of Putra Malaysia), Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
- ⁵⁸⁶Department of Parasitology and Entomology, Tarbiat Modares University, Tehran, Iran
- ⁵⁸⁷Department of Bioengineering and Therapeutical Sciences, University of California San Francisco, San Francisco, CA, USA
- ⁵⁸⁸Department of Administration, PG&AI, San Francisco, CA, USA
- ⁵⁸⁹School of Public Health, Wuhan University of Science and Technology, Wuhan, China
- ⁵⁹⁰Hubei Province Key Laboratory of Occupational Hazard Identification and Control, Wuhan University of Science and Technology, Wuhan, China
- ⁵⁹¹School of Public Health, Wuhan University, Wuhan, China
- ⁵⁹²Indian Institute of Public Health, Public Health Foundation of India, Gurugram, India.

Appendix A. Supplementary data

Supplementary data to this article can be found online at <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.puhe.2024.06.011>.

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