

Geneva Journalism and Health Mentoring Initiative

The Challenge

Finding effective ways to

- Enter the stadium – overcoming obstacles to accessing health information
- Democratise knowledge – making health information understandable
- Bring it home – enhancing the utility of health information for all

Why Journalism and Health

Journalism and public health are public goods. Journalists are key contributors to people's health literacy (the ability to access, assess and use information for health). Poor health literacy is associated with poor health choices, increased illnesses, higher health costs and death. Health literacy is one of the strongest predictors of health along with age, gender, ethnicity, income and empowerment. Paradoxically, journalism training does not often focus on public health and the study of public health gives low priority to the role of journalists as public health educators and informers.

Who's there? Yes (WTY) is a new independent initiative which aims to address this paradox by raising the health literacy of journalists and an awareness of their roles and their responsibilities to raise health literacy of others. A proof of concept workshop is bringing 15 international journalists, scientists and advocates from around the world to the 66th session of the World Health Assembly (WHA) for a hands-on understanding of global health policies. Through a series of meetings with key policy makers, advocates and analysts, participants will reflect and identify effective ways to gain information from and about the work and plans of WHA participants (National Public Health Authorities including Ministers of Health from 198 countries of the WHO). While the WHA, the World Health Organisation's apex body, is the largest gathering of public health decision makers from around the world, its public recognition remains low.

The initiative will explore the role of communications as a determinant of public health together with epidemiology, law and economics. The curriculum will have inputs from governments, civil society, the private sector and academia.

Why Geneva

Geneva is home to the WHO, the only global multilateral policy setter. It is home to the World Trade Organisation (WTO), the quasi-judicial global free trade voice on issues such as access and patents. The city hosts several multilateral health-related organizations like the GAVI, UNAIDS, The Global Fund and hundreds of civil society groups. Switzerland is home to some of the best technology and pharmaceutical companies in the world and cutting edge research centres.

Decisions taken in Switzerland have far reaching effects on policy direction and funding priorities for countries that are home to the world's largest burden of diseases. **Who's there? Yes** aims to bring health home where we are all policy makers.

This initiative is mentored by Mr. Subramaniam Ramadorai, who, beginning in 1968 led India's IT revolution with TATA Consultancy Services (TCS) and retired as its MD and CEO in 2010. Mr. Ramadorai sits on several boards and is Chairman of the Mumbai Stock Exchange. He is a recipient of numerous awards and is an advisor (with full Cabinet Rank) to the Prime Minister of India on developing the world's largest skill development initiative out of India. He is the first global business leader from India to mentor a public health initiative out of Geneva, Switzerland. He is passionately interested in public health.

It is led by Ms. Chitra Subramaniam Duella, among India's best known journalists, political commentator and analyst (Stanford and Delhi Universities), Founder CSD consulting, Switzerland and Dr. Franklin Apfel, MD, an health communicator (Swathmore, Columbia and UC Davis) and Managing Director of World Health Communications Associates (United Kingdom). They are united by a mutual interest in understanding journalism and public health as public goods.
