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Letter to the Editor

WHO's Updated Recommendations: A Renewed Call to Strengthen Global and Local Commitments Toward Malaria Elimination

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To the editor,

On April 24, 2025, the World Health Organization (WHO) issued an urgent call to reinvigorate global action to end malaria, releasing updated guidelines that reflect both progress and persisting challenges in combating this deadly disease. [1] This renewed guidance arrives at a critical juncture: global malaria cases have plateaued, progress is faltering, and health systems in endemic regions face increasing strain from drug resistance, climate change, and funding shortfalls.

The 2025 WHO guidelines emphasize a sharper, evidence-informed focus on adaptive strategies, building on decades of progress while addressing emerging risks. A key update is the integration of malaria surveillance as a core intervention, reinforcing the importance of real-time data to drive targeted responses. This approach has shown remarkable success in regions like the WHO European Region under the Tashkent Declaration and in Southern Africa through the Elimination 8 initiative. [2,3]

In addition, WHO recommends expanding access to proven tools such as insecticide-treated nets, indoor residual spraying, rapid diagnostic testing, seasonal chemoprevention, and the deployment of next-generation technologies. [1,4] These measures are essential in adapting to local transmission dynamics, which vary widely even within countries. Critically, the guidelines urge countries to tailor interventions through inclusive and localized strategies, promoting community participation and health system strengthening.

The significance of these updates cannot be overstated. Despite historic investments, malaria continues to kill over 600,000 people annually, primarily children under five in sub-Saharan Africa. [5] One of the greatest current threats is the spread of *Plasmodium falciparum* resistance to artemisinin-based combination therapies, the cornerstone of modern malaria treatment. [6] Without an urgent response, this resistance could undermine decades of progress.

Moreover, climate variability and environmental disruptions have expanded the geographic range of mosquito vectors, challenging conventional control methods. [7] Funding remains insufficient and unevenly distributed, with countries in elimination phases often struggling to secure sustained resources needed to prevent resurgence. [4,8] These barriers are compounded by fragile health systems and limited political commitment in high-burden countries.

Yet there is hope. Recent work by Feachem et al. shows that malaria eradication is not only scientifically feasible but economically justified and morally necessary. [4] The success of countries like Sri Lanka and Paraguay, once endemic, demonstrates what is

possible when national leadership, community engagement, and international cooperation align. [4,5] The 2025 WHO guidelines explicitly draw on these lessons, emphasizing the need for multisectoral partnerships, strategic financing, and rigorous monitoring frameworks.

Local actors are pivotal to the success of these recommendations. Community health workers, national malaria programs, and civil society must be empowered to lead implementation, adapting strategies to the sociocultural and epidemiological realities on the ground. [2,3] Surveillance, accountability, and real-time feedback loops must be embedded at the local level to ensure responsiveness and sustainability.

International cooperation is equally critical. As highlighted in the WHO's *World Malaria Report* and by the Gates Foundation, consistent, well-aligned donor funding and cross-border collaboration can dramatically amplify results. [5,8] The updated guidelines provide a blueprint for action, but the global health community must rise to the occasion with coordinated political will and targeted investments.

The stakes are high. Without renewed momentum, the world risks a resurgence of malaria and the erosion of previous gains. Inaction would disproportionately harm the most vulnerable and increase the future financial burden of control efforts. By contrast, timely adoption of the 2025 WHO guidelines could accelerate the path to a malaria-free generation, delivering health, economic, and social benefits on a global scale.

In closing, WHO's April 2025 call is a clarion reminder: ending malaria is within reach, but it demands bold, unified action now. Policymakers, funders, health professionals, and citizens alike must champion this cause. Priority actions include integrating malaria programs with broader health systems, expanding access to diagnostics and treatment, supporting innovation, and ensuring community-driven implementation. Let us not squander this opportunity. The tools, knowledge, and momentum exist—we must now match them with commitment.

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None.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

None.

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