



3-7 APRIL 2017

**15th** WORLD CONGRESS  
ON PUBLIC HEALTH  
2017 MELBOURNE AUSTRALIA  
VOICES • VISION • ACTION

15th World Congress on Public Health Secretariat  
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## **New flu types; Africa getting healthier; Trump; and more—Global challenges at the World Congress on Public Health**

- **Could Trump’s rejection of trade agreements be healthy?**
- **Africa is getting healthier**
- **Tuberculosis will kill 4,000 people today**
- **New flu types are appearing faster**
- **We’re not ready for the next pandemic**

### **Global challenges today, Tuesday 4 April at the 15<sup>th</sup> World Congress on Public Health**

- More at [www.scienceinpublic.com.au/publichealthcongress](http://www.scienceinpublic.com.au/publichealthcongress)
- Researchers available for interview, contact Niall Byrne on 0417 131 977 or [niall@scienceinpublic.com.au](mailto:niall@scienceinpublic.com.au)

### **Africa is getting healthier, but we need to reduce slums, waste, violent death, and climate change**

Over the past decade, Africans have been getting healthier—there are half as many kids dying of malaria; more and more people receiving life-saving treatment for HIV/AIDS; and polio, leprosy and measles are close to elimination.

If this continues, Africa will be well on its way to achieving the health targets of the Sustainable Development Goals, says **Alex Ezeh**, Executive Director of the **African Population and Health Research Center**. He’ll talk about how the growth of slum populations, waste, climate change, and violent deaths will be the biggest hurdles to overcome, but why the rise of the middle class, growing democracy and strong regional and global partnerships are cause for optimism.

### **Seven new avian flu types in people in the past five years – the pandemic threat is escalating**

It took almost 40 years after the 1918 Spanish flu for the next novel influenza virus to emerge, and then more than 10 years for the next one. In a worrying development, seven new strains have caused illness in humans in the last five years around the globe, including in China, Egypt, the US and Europe, according to research published this week in the Archives of Public Health and presented at the Congress.

The reasons for this rapid recent increase in new flu viruses are unknown. It could be due to changes in climate, urbanisation and agricultural practices as well as better diagnostics, but none of these have increased at the same rate as the viruses have.

Co-author and director of the **UNSW**–led NHMRC Centre for Research Excellence in Epidemic Response, Professor **Raina MacIntyre** says it’s not possible to predict which virus will cause the next pandemic, as witnessed in 2009. “Efforts had focussed on avian flu, but the flu virus which emerged was completely different.”



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## We're not ready for the next pandemic

Ebola, SARS, Zika, influenza. In today's world things spread fast—ideas, fake news and infectious diseases. More than 3 billion passengers travel trillions of miles by air. If just one of them is carrying an infectious disease, it could mean devastation on the other side of the planet.

We're not ready. The 2014 Ebola outbreak showed that public health, law, defence forces and emergency response services to respond to epidemics is seriously lacking. Poorly equipped treatment centres were overflowing, riots erupted as soldiers enforced quarantine zones at gunpoint, doctors and nurses without proper protective gear contracted the virus from infected patients, and food shortages and prices spiked due to border closures.

The threat of a deadly influenza pandemic is growing. Yesterday at the Congress **Professor Raina MacIntyre** and her colleagues from the UNSW-led NHMRC Centre for Research Excellence in Epidemic Response ran a hypothetical epidemic disaster. Did we survive? Find out from Raina today.

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## How international trade agreements affect our health

*Could Trump's withdrawal from the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) end up being a good thing for public health?*

Free trade agreements might be good for the economy, but they can also have unintended health consequences. For example, the extra-legal rights for pharmaceutical companies allowed in the Trans Pacific Partnership might have led to medicine price hikes. Similarly, investment provisions can give foreign companies the right to sue governments over public health and environmental policies that harm their investments. While cigarette companies would not have been able to use the TPP to challenge tobacco control policies like plain packaging, policies on other public health issues like alcohol and nutrition would have been at risk.

**Dr Deborah Gleeson** from **La Trobe University** will present analysis of the potential health impacts of the proposed Pacific Agreement on Economic Relations (PACER) Plus trade agreement between the Pacific Island Forum countries, including Australia.

Her analysis found potential for health improvement through the economic and social benefits of PACER Plus. However, she also found potential for negative health impacts in the Pacific islands through the privatisation of health services, the diversion of health system resources to service medical tourism, the exacerbation of health worker shortages, increased availability and reduced cost of unhealthy products, and restrictions on policies to address health issues.

## Why will tuberculosis kill 4,000 people today?

Tuberculosis (TB) is treatable and preventable. What do we need to do to end the epidemic by 2030?

Tuberculosis was the leading cause of death in Australian 130 years ago. Globally we're winning. The TB mortality rate fell by 45 per cent and the prevalence rate by 41 per cent from 1990 to 2013. But...

"TB is now the world's number one cause of death from infectious disease, having overtaken HIV," says **Dr Suman Majumdar**, a TB and health security expert at **Burnet Institute**.

"Current projections show that by 2050, antimicrobial resistance will kill more people than cancer. Drug-resistant tuberculosis is a leading contributor to these deadly drug-resistant diseases. More



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than half of drug-resistant tuberculosis cases are found in Australia's adjoining neighbours in the Asia Pacific region."

*The World Congress on Public Health is on from 3 to 7 April at the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre.*

*More at <http://www.wcph2017.com/media.php> and @wcph2017 on Twitter.*

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