

Health Policy

1. Genomic Medicine and Evidence-based Policy making: Prospects and Tensions

Convenor	Nishtha Bharti, University of Oxford
Co-Convenor(s)	Mahendra Shahare, Indian Institute of Technology Bombay
Keywords	Health Policy and Practices, Technology and Policy, Digital Societies and Governance

Call for Abstracts

One of the key features of genomic medicine is that large-scale genomic databases are used to diagnose diseases and predict health outcomes. Recent years have witnessed a proliferation of state-sponsored genomic projects in India, Africa, Bangladesh, Japan, the Philippines etc. that have ventured into genome sequencing, disease mapping and attendant policy interventions, being undertaken alongside externally funded multi-country genomic consortiums in South Asia, Asia Pacific and Pan-African regions (GenomeAsia100K Consortium 2019; Omotoso et al. 2022). For example, in February 2024, the GenomeIndia project consortium announced the completion of whole genome sequencing of 10,000 Indian individuals (PIB 2024).

Drawing on the recent profusion of genomic initiatives informing policy making in the Global South, we seek to investigate: In what ways can we navigate the exigencies of evidence-based, data-driven policy making while responsibly leveraging research in genomic medicine? How can we integrate multilayered medical epistemologies in healthcare policies when encountering new and emerging technologies? How can policy instruments address cultural subjectivities in the face of regulatory capture by powerful interest groups in medicine and beyond (e.g. Global North vs Global South)? What challenges beset inclusive policy making practices in representing the values and priorities of diverse communities in genomic research?

These enquiries hold value in understanding the layered manifestations of legal accountability, societal trustworthiness and ethical preparedness for various policy making paradigms. They are also relevant for questions of policy making that negotiate the shifting scales between contextual, tacit medical knowledge on one hand and precision medicine-led, data-centred approaches on the other. Our aim for this panel is to gather a conceptually and empirically grounded set of analyses around contemporary healthcare policy making and its interaction with emerging technologies.

In this panel we intend to utilise genomic medicine as a site for investigating potential zones of convergence between evidence-based, data-driven policy making and responsible innovation practices in healthcare. Envisioning a diversity of interdisciplinary perspectives and a variety of methodological contributions, we invite submissions that:

- Address the relationship between contemporary datalogical, evidence-based approaches in policy making and competing knowledge frames surrounding genomic research.
- Contribute to ongoing conversations about the representation of diverse population groups (ethnicity, ancestry etc.) in genomic repositories emerging from the Global South and their implications for policy formulations and processes.
- Explore avenues through which the claims, experiences and epistemologies of hitherto marginalised communities can be substantively incorporated in data-driven policy making.
- Investigate the possibilities and methodologies for ‘policy co-design’, where participants, researchers and policymakers collaboratively identify agendas, co-produce knowledge and map guidelines for the ethical use of genomic data and for equitable medical deployments.

- Identify the interactions between law, public policy and various instruments of governance to deliver productive understandings of how these can come together and implement evidence-based healthcare interventions responsibly and sustainably.
- Engage with the challenges of navigating technological slippery slopes in healthcare interfaces and steering them through participatory decision making.
- Examine the foundational concerns related to large-scale collection, digitisation, and analysis of genomic information of populations and consequent ethical dilemmas occasioned in policy making.

2. Approaches to Address Health Equity Challenges

Convenor	Parvaiz Masoodi, Medical Superintendent, Government Medical College and Associated Hospital, Baramulla (Jammu & Kashmir)
Keywords	Health Policy, Health Practices

Call for Abstracts

Health equity is the endeavour to ensure health for all, especially for vulnerable populations. However, it is equally important to comprehend health inequity, which raises questions about unjust and unfair distribution of health outcomes. This issue intersects with disparities related to poverty, discrimination, and access to healthcare. Identifying inequality is crucial in order to understand it. Consequently, the question arises: what approach should be taken to address this inequality? Two possible approaches are absolute and relative inequality, which can be explored to promote health equity. When discussing health equity, our focus often narrows to economic status, but the conversation extends beyond that to various factors such as social and economic considerations.

The public health reality in the Global South context is shaped by these factors, which affect different people in various ways. Vulnerability to health risks varies based on individual circumstances, as evidenced during the COVID-19 pandemic. Addressing the multifaceted aspects of health equity, particularly for vulnerable populations, remains crucial amidst crises and social injustices.

The panel invites papers on the following questions related to health equity; however, these questions are indicative and not exhaustive.

- How can non-medical factors accelerate vulnerability in similar health parameters?
- How have social, economic, and geographic factors influenced the public health landscape to ensure health equity, especially for vulnerable populations?
- What collaborative efforts are required to achieve health equity, and what roles do different stakeholders play in this scope?
- Given the context of the Global South, what pertinent policy and implementation cases are available to ensure health equity?

3. Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) in the Global South: Navigating towards Equity and Empowerment

Convenor	Karan Babbar, Assistant Professor, Jindal Global Business School, OP Jindal Global University
-----------------	---

Keywords	Sexual and Reproductive Health, Gender Equity, Global South
<p>Call for Abstracts</p> <p>This panel tackles access to sexual and reproductive healthcare (SRH) globally, emphasizing human rights and dismantling gender norms. We invite submissions that explore the complexities of navigating SRH in the Global South.</p> <p>Potential areas of exploration include, but are not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy and programmatic interventions to improve access to SRH services. • The role of social norms, culture, and religion in shaping SRH experiences. • Innovative solutions for tackling period poverty and promoting menstrual health and hygiene. • The impact of economic inequalities and power dynamics on SRH access and utilization. • Strategies for fostering inclusive and youth friendly SRH services. • The role of technology and digital platforms in expanding SRH information and access. • Case studies that highlight successful approaches to addressing SRH challenges. <p>We encourage submissions that employ diverse methodological approaches, including qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods research. We welcome papers that present original research, critical analyses of existing policies, and case studies showcasing innovative solutions. This panel is particularly interested in submissions that focus on specific regions or countries within the Global South.</p>	

4. Right to Health and Regionalism: The Need for Regional Ethics-based Framework to Ensure Reduction of Harm Caused due to Tobacco Consumption

Convenor	Ishani Das, Advocate (consultant) & Assistant Professor of Law at Amity University, Kolkata
Keywords	Health Equity, Harm Reduction, Cancers
<p>Call for Abstracts</p> <p>The panel welcomes interdisciplinary research which examines the intersection of law, policy social sciences and technology with the aim to reduce harm caused due to tobacco consumption, and mitigate cancers. The objective is to encourage dialogues and promote a structured development and adoption of harm reduction strategies against tobacco products causing cancers.</p> <p>The normative influence of socio-economic, political, and sustainable development in international regulations have purported to regulate State conduct in pursuit of a better world for future generations. However, inspite of its substantial presence in the international discourse, the legal nature of the concept is still debated in various international fora. The emerging focus on regional cooperation brings with it the inherent element of sustainable development to address global/regional health challenges. The notion of regional cooperation in the global south has the potential to form the bedrock of a better tomorrow.</p> <p>The diverse areas covered by the panel shall include but not be limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tobacco - an endgame for elimination of cancers • Culture and Tobacco eradication 	

- Pharmaceutical industry and Tobacco products
- Technology and innovation in harm reduction strategies

5. Towards An Era of Equitable Global Public Health Policymaking – A Post-Pandemic Inventory

Convenor

Paramita Dasgupta, Director, Centre for Public Health Laws & Policy, The West Bengal National University of Juridical Sciences (WBNUJS), Kolkata

Keywords

Public Health Policy, Universal Health Coverage, Health Equity

Call for Abstracts

This panel invites papers along the lines of the themes outlined below

- Health as a fundamental human right - stock-taking, circa 2024.
- SDG3, Universal Health Coverage and the political economy.
- Global Public Health Policymaking – the Pandemic Accord & the resurgence of the “Global North versus Global South” stalemates.
- Public Health imperatives vis-à-vis “classic” interpretation paradigms of Intellectual Property Protection – TRIPS and Public Health.
- The long road toward equity in access to essential medications – HIV, Ebola, TB, Covid-19.
- Universal Health Coverage and BigPharma Patent Monopolies - Competing or Conflicting Rights?
- Systemic flaws, historical misjudgements and marginalisation – challenges & potentials for rectification that the existing public health landscape presents.
- The merits & de-merits of privatisation in public health – a necessary balancing act or serving many masters?
- Collaboration instead of competition – how nodal international institutions can play a key role in encouraging the birth of a new global ecosystem of mutually symbiotic functioning in good faith, characterised by fair & equitable knowledge-sharing between nations and economies.