



Don't trade Wealth for Health:

Free trade agreements require input from health actors to ensure access to essential medicines and protection of public health.

During our medical training, we witness firsthand the crucial benefit that access to affordable medications gives to patients. The ability to receive such life-saving medicines is critical for preventing unnecessary deaths due to both infectious and noncommunicable diseases. A key to the availability of these medicines is access to quality generic medications and competition to drive down prices. Free trade agreements have the potential to decrease availability of generic medications. Unfortunately, these negotiations are often directed in secret by trade ministries, with little input from health experts inside or outside governments. According to the World Trade Organization and World Health Organization report in 2002, "Health and trade policy-makers can benefit from closer cooperation to ensure coherence between their different areas of responsibilities." To ensure health for our patients, health voices need to be heard within negotiations on free trade agreements.

While traditionally focused on tariff reduction and market access, free trade agreements increasingly include provisions on intellectual property (IP) standards and regulations. For example, the *Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights* (TRIPS) agreement intended to establish global norms of IP regulation. These include increasing IP restrictions on medicines, which limits the availability of cheaper generics.

Ongoing free trade negotiations, such as the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) and Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP), seek to expand IP regulation beyond even the standards established by TRIPS. While WHO discusses improving access to medicines among member states, simultaneously many member states are negotiating trade agreements that would give private corporations standing to challenge such regulations when they harm corporate profit, thus undermining WHO's initiatives.

With this connection between free trade and public health, we submit that health actors need to be engaged in and integrated into free trade negotiations in order to ensure the following:

- That trade agreements do not impede the ability of national governments to create and implement effective public health policy that align with their values.
- Protections for public health provided in the *TRIPS* agreement and further defined in the *Doha Declaration on the TRIPS agreement and Public Health* are preserved within new IP policy.
- Prohibition of "evergreening;" use of minor modifications of existing medications to extend market exclusivity.
- Opposition of provisions that allow data exclusivity to restrict the emergence of biological generic medications in the market.
- Assessment and evaluation of the impact of trade on health to inform future trade negotiations and policy.

On behalf of health professionals in training, we implore you to ensure that public health takes primacy over short-term trade interests, to ensure access to current and innovative new medicines for all our future patients. As current trade agreements in negotiation are expected to set a precedent from future agreements, we hope that it will also set a precedent in prioritizing the health of our nations.

International Federation of Medical Students' Associations (IFMSA) and Universities Allied for Essential Medicines (UAEM) believe that **more health actors** are essential within negotiations on trade agreements in order to protect public health and ensure access to essential medicines.

"As the world becomes increasingly integrated, it becomes less and less possible for different policy areas to be handled independently of each other." - WTO and WHO joint report

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