

## China's health reform: 10 years on

In October, 2009, the Chinese Government launched Healthy China 2020—a political commitment to establishing an accessible, affordable, and efficient health system for all by 2020. The programme was later reinforced and expanded, in 2016, with Healthy China 2030, which incorporated the newly agreed Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and propelled Healthy China reform into the SDGs era. On July 15, 2019, the State Council announced a series of 15 recommended actions to achieve Healthy China, focusing on public health and prevention. Over this past decade, China's Government has unveiled a series of policies to signal its growing commitment to investing in health and has clearly made health a foundation for its development. 10 years after its landmark commitment to health, has China delivered on its promises?

The latest mortality, morbidity, and risk factors estimates from the Global Burden of Diseases, Injuries, and Risk Factor Study (GBD) 2017, published in *The Lancet*, reveal how China has made substantial progress in reducing the burden of many diseases and disabilities due to maternal, neonatal, and communicable conditions. However, the analysis also shows that non-communicable diseases (NCDs) are increasing. The ten leading causes of death are: stroke, ischaemic heart disease, COPD, lung cancer, Alzheimer's disease, liver cancer, stomach cancer, hypertensive heart disease, road injuries, and oesophageal cancer. High systolic blood pressure, smoking, high sodium diet, and ambient particulate matter pollution were the leading four risk factors contributing to deaths and disability-adjusted life-years (DALYs). In that regard, the July 15 announcement focusing on prevention is welcome and, if implemented powerfully and widely, could well curb the rise in NCDs and unhealthy lifestyle.

What the GBD analyses also reveal is the large disparity in health outcomes between provinces and cities across China. The growing rural–urban inequalities cannot be ignored, as they threaten to hamper China's health and development ambitions. Even the so-called urban health advantage is not shared by all: compared with hukou residents, migrants are less likely to access services.

In this issue of *The Lancet Public Health*, a series of Articles and opinion pieces draw attention to several public health issues that illustrate the progress and challenges for public health leaders in China. For example,

current estimates indicate that every year more than 100 000 women are diagnosed with cervical cancer in China. Cervical cancer is the sixth most frequent cancer in women and the third most frequent in women aged 15–44 years in China. While in May, 2018, WHO called for actions for the elimination of cervical cancer, China still has a long way to go before achieving elimination (<4 cases per 100 000). In their Article, Changfa Xia and colleagues model what it would take for China to eliminate cervical cancer.

Road traffic injuries are another example where, despite a decrease in road traffic mortality, the SDG target to halve deaths and injuries from road traffic accidents by 2020 is unlikely to be reached in China. Lijun Wang and colleagues estimated road traffic mortality at about 11.0 deaths per 100 000 population (for 2016). In this issue, a GBD report on fatal and non-fatal injury shows that the incidence of injuries in China has increased (1990–2017), but cause-specific mortality and DALYs have declined, suggesting that improvements in health care or decreases in injury severity have led to improvements in mortality and overall health loss.

In a series of Comments and Correspondences, public health experts recognise the importance of the political commitment to health that the Healthy China policy represents. Nevertheless, for Chi Zang and Peng Gong much more coordinated cross-sectoral actions are needed to deliver Healthy China. For Xin Wang and colleagues, the importance of public engagement in health system reform could not be more emphasised—people should be participants and not merely recipients of health care. They also underline the importance of health literacy; particularly in a country marred by a deteriorating doctor–patient relationship. Finally, Runsen Chen and colleagues remind us of the danger of excluding minorities from progress by drawing attention to the stigma and discrimination experienced by LGBT communities in China.

The 10-year health reform in China has generated improvements in public health and saved lives. To ensure China delivers on its promises, progress needs to be more rapid and more evenly distributed.

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For the **GBD paper** see **Articles Lancet** 2019; published online June 24. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(19\)30427-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(19)30427-1)

For the **road traffic injuries paper** see **Articles Lancet Public Health** 2019; 4: e245–55