

Health and Wellbeing Mission: Being whole and well in body, mind and nature

The challenge of achieving universal human wellbeing means overcoming stark inequalities that characterize prevailing human conditions. These inequalities reflect evident disparities of income, education, demographic trends (e.g. fertility, life expectancy and ageing), population health outcomes and healthcare access across maternal, child and adolescent health, infectious diseases, non-communicable diseases and mental health (TWI2050, 2018). Human wellbeing should become a central tenet of economic progress and is not simply interpreted as a means to an end – to service shareholder or state benefits. Indeed, human health and wellbeing should be understood as preconditions for, and outcomes of, sustainable development (Dora et al., 2015). This means that health outcomes are useful indicators of progress in sustainable development.

The core research activities pursued under this mission should address the achievement of health equity for current and future generations. In recent decades, there has rightly been increased attention to the social determinants of health and health inequalities; however, less attention has been paid to the ecological determinants of health and intergenerational health equity. The focus needs to be on preventing and achieving solutions through cross-sectoral collaborations, promoting community participation and empowerment, and through integrating social science knowledge, laboratory science, medicine, public health interventions, development studies, medical anthropology, etc. There is a pressing need to bring human ecology into epidemiology in understanding, and responding to, patterns of health.

Critical areas for scientific inquiry:

- Developing pathways to universal access to quality healthcare and equitable health insurance systems;
- Improving global health governance (i.e. leadership, coordination, programme effectiveness and priority setting);
- Improving understanding of, and identifying equitable prevention and treatment pathways for specific health threats (e.g. mental health, microbial resistance, non-communicable diseases, neglected tropical diseases, malaria, tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS and vector-borne disease);
- Improving future pandemic preparedness and the resilience of health systems to disasters and emergencies;
- Expanding understanding of the socio-economic, cultural and environmental drivers of emerging infectious diseases (such as COVID-19, Ebola and SARS);
- Developing advanced therapies, precision medicine, digital health and tele-medicine, and indigenous medicines;
- Improving understanding of public health and its environmental connections (e.g. health effects of air pollution and climate change);
- Advancing a 'One Health' approach to protect the health of people, animals and the environment;
- Advancing critical understanding of prevailing and emergent demographic trends and their socio-economic consequences and implications (including reducing maternal and infant mortality);
- Systematically measuring and monitoring global human health and wellbeing; and
- Understanding the implications of the mismatch between humans and their contemporary environments, and what this means for disease prevention and health promotion.