50 YEARS OF GLOBAL HEALTH PROGRESS

1968: Studies of cancer in nonhuman primates provided compelling new evidence that the Epstein-Barr virus, discovered four years earlier, can lead to cancer in humans.

1971: Measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccine approved, providing protection against three highly infectious illnesses at the same time, via one shot.

1974: Expanded Programme on Immunization (EPI) established to develop and expand immunization programs, initially targeting diphtheria, whooping cough, tetanus, measles, poliomyelitis, and tuberculosis, towards the goal of providing universal immunization for all children by 1990.

1977: The first angiotensin-converting-enzyme (ACE) inhibitor developed for the treatment of hypertension, is discovered.

1978: First synthetic ‘human’ insulin produced, the first human protein to be manufactured through biotechnology, enabling patients to avoid the allergic reactions that insulin from cattle and pigs could cause.

1978: First IFPMA Code of Practice developed as the foundation for industry’s global self-regulation, setting ethical and professional standards.

1979: Biotechnology scientists identify the previously unidentified virus Hepatitis C, which is now known to affect about 2% of the world’s population.

1980: Worldwide vaccination programs result in the eradication of smallpox, a contagious virus with no known cure which killed an estimated 300-500 million people in the 20th century.

1981: First IFPMA Code of Practice developed as the foundation for industry’s global self-regulation, setting ethical and professional standards.


1983: First pregnant woman vaccinated with human papilloma virus (HPV) vaccine approved, which protects from cervical cancer, a common cancer among women under 35.


1985: First manufactured insulin pen launched, offering greater ease of use and accuracy for patients versus the vial-and-syringe method of insulin delivery.

1986: Establishment of the Global Polio Eradication Initiative, which has contributed to the 99.9% reduction in global incidence of polio.

1987: The first antiretroviral (ARV) drug is approved by the US FDA as treatment for HIV, beginning a new era of highly active ARV treatment.

1988: WHO publishes Ethical Criteria for Medicinal Drug Promotion, the first frame of reference for judging proper behavior in drug promotion.

1989: Biotechnology scientists identify the previously unidentified virus Hepatitis C, which is now known to affect about 2% of the world’s population.

1990: Adoption of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), a blueprint for meeting the needs of the world’s poorest with a focus on child mortality, maternal health, HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases.

1991: Development of the Vaccine Alliance, a public-private global health partnership committed to increasing access to immunization in poor countries.

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1999: Approval of direct-acting antivirals (DAAs), called protease inhibitors, which, combined with interferon and ribavirin, improve cure rates among patients with the most common hepatitis C genotype to 70%.

2000: Launch of Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, a public-private global health partnership committed to increasing access to immunization in poor countries.

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2014: Development of CAR-T cell therapies - programmed T cells aim to hunt, bind to, and eliminate cancer cells.

2015: Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted by world leaders, setting out a global sustainable development agenda which emphasizes collaboration across countries, actors, and sectors for a wide array of development outcomes, health and wellbeing prime among them.

2016: First approval of a TB drug in 40 years, bedaquiline, unique in that it interferes with the enzyme required by bacteria to replicate.

2017: Launch of Access Accelerated with 23 global biopharmaceutical companies, the World Bank, the Union of International Cancer Control (UICC), and Boston University to combat NCDs globally.