

IAPO Principles on Universal Health Coverage

The International Alliance of Patients' Organizations (IAPO) is a unique global alliance representing patients of all nationalities. Everything we do is focused on promoting patient-centred healthcare. We do this by being the global voice for people who suffer from any disease, disability, illness, impairment or syndrome, and by being the focal point for local, national, regional and international patients' organizations. The essential principles guiding patient-centred healthcare are that healthcare systems are designed and services delivered so that patients' needs are answered. **Patients are the first consideration.**

IAPO welcomes the political commitment of international organizations and national governments to universal and equitable health coverage. However, more needs to be done to follow-through on this commitment. Some IAPO members report a lack of commitment and inadequate funding to enable improvements in health policy and services. Members report that healthcare is often unaffordable for patients and their families and there are disparities in access to healthcare.

IAPO has worked with its members to develop the following principles on universal health coverage from a patient perspective. We believe these principles need to be the core components of health systems and we call on all governments and stakeholders to support and put into practice these principles to ensure affordable, high quality equitable access for all their citizens.

1. Accessibility

All patients have the right to access the healthcare that they need, when they need it.

2. Patient-centredness and equity

All people, regardless of disease or condition; age, gender, race or ethnic background; sexual orientation; geographic location; socio-cultural background, economic or legal status must have fair and impartial access to quality healthcare.

3. Choice and empowerment

All patients have the right to know about the healthcare services that are available. Patients must be able to be meaningfully involved in healthcare decision-making in a variety of ways at the local, national, regional and global level.

4. Quality

It is not enough for all patients to have access to healthcare. Provision needs to be safe, of the highest attainable standard and include a commitment to learning and improvement. Patients need to define what constitutes quality in healthcare.

5. Partnership and collaboration

Patients have a moral and ethical right to play a meaningful role at all levels; in health and in other areas that can have an impact on health and wellbeing.

6. Sustainability and the value of healthcare

All stakeholders need to recognise the *value* of healthcare when considering investing in universal health coverage.

7. Accountability and transparency

Accountability and transparency are vital to delivering safe, effective and affordable healthcare. All stakeholders need to be held accountable on commitments they have made to implement universal health coverage, and be accountable to the patients that they serve.

More details of what each of these principles means to patients can be found on the IAPO website.