



ACCESS TO MEDICINES  
AND HEALTH PRODUCTS

# WHO guideline on country pharmaceutical pricing policies



World Health  
Organization



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WHO guideline on country pharmaceutical pricing policies, second edition

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Web Annex B: Evidence-to-Decision tables.

# Abbreviations

ATC	Anatomical Therapeutic Chemical Classification System
GDG	guideline development group
GRADE	Grading of Recommendations Assessment, Development and Evaluation
HTA	health technology assessment
R&D	research and development
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
TRIPS	Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights
WHO	World Health Organization
WTO	World Trade Organization

# Foreword

Universal health coverage hinges on the right of everyone to access safe, quality-assured, effective and affordable medicines.

Unaffordable prices for medicines have become one of the most pressing concerns for patients and health-care systems in high-, middle- and low-income countries alike. WHO constantly hears from governments struggling with rising pharmaceutical prices when trying to provide population-wide access to life-saving health products for people in need, especially for people living with chronic diseases.

In 2019, the World Health Assembly expressed its serious concerns “about high prices for some health products, and inequitable access to such products within and among Member States, as well as the financial hardships associated with high prices which impede progress towards achieving universal health coverage”. Every year, out-of-pocket expenditures for medicines force approximately 100 million people into poverty. Worst of all, many people simply do not have access to potentially life-saving products many years after the discovery of these products. Such a situation is clearly not acceptable because medical innovation has little value to our society if people cannot access its benefits.

Strong country pharmaceutical pricing policies can improve the affordability of pharmaceutical products when carefully planned, carried out, and regularly checked and revised according to changing conditions. Over the years, the World Health Organization (WHO) has supported countries in the development of pharmaceutical pricing policies, including working with experts to formulate policy recommendations such as those presented in this publication.

This guideline has been revised to reflect the years of country experiences and the existing evidence on pricing policies. It contains recommendations for ten pricing policies commonly considered in countries to manage medicine prices, as well as pragmatic considerations for what is required to implement these policies according to the objectives and context of individual health systems. WHO will continue to work with countries in the coming years to develop sound pharmaceutical pricing policies, including by running workshops with country stakeholders and enabling information sharing through the Fair Pricing Forum.

As I write this Foreword, the world is grappling with the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic is a constant reminder that in a globalized crisis, we will only find solutions through global cooperation. Similarly, for an issue that is now

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