

Global anaesthesia: Why it matters

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Why should we care about our anaesthetic colleagues in other countries around the world? Why should we care about their patients? Can our vision of equity in New Zealand be translated to the global context?

We will have different answers to these questions but I think that global anaesthesia matters because:

- We have made a global promise to improve healthcare for all;
- We have an ethical responsibility;
- We are all interconnected.

COVID-19 has shown us that we live in an interdependent world where “no-one is safe until everyone is safe”. A recent UNICEF statement says: “There is a choice. The world of the next 10 years can be one of greater justice, abundance and dignity. Or it can be one of greater conflict, insecurity and poverty.”¹ In my view, these themes can be applied to healthcare in general.

We live in a world where 5 billion out of 7 billion people (over 70% of the population) do not have access to safe, affordable anaesthesia and surgical care when needed.² In 2015, the World Health Assembly recognized this crisis and unanimously voted to strengthen anaesthesia and surgical care worldwide. It is important that we hold governments to their promise.

The World Federation of Societies of Anaesthesiologists (WFSA) is a federation of 135 societies representing anaesthesiologists in 150 countries worldwide. Our vision is “universal access to safe anaesthesia” and we work with member societies to improve availability of anaesthesia, improve patient safety, and protect the wellbeing of anaesthesiologists (www.wfsahq.org).

The COVID-19 pandemic has likely increased healthcare disparities in many parts of the world. Anaesthesiologists are playing a vital role in the management of COVID patients and non-COVID patients and the WFSA will continue advocating for improved resourcing for our specialty and our colleagues around the world. We are all in this together.

References:

1. UNICEF. No-one is safe until everyone is safe. <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/no-one-safe-until-everyone-safe-why-we-need-global-response-covid-19>. Published 24 May 2021.
2. Meara JG, Leather AJM, Hagander L, et al. **The Lancet Commissions Global Surgery 2030: evidence and solutions for achieving health, welfare, and economic development.** *Lancet.* 2015;386:569-624.