

Physicians urged to participate in health systems change to safeguard professional autonomy: New Global Physician leader

New World Medical Association President Dr Ashok Philip calls on physicians worldwide to contribute to healthcare policy development and health systems change

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/EINPresswire.com/ -- Incoming President of the World Medical Association, [Dr Ashok Philip](#), launched a call for physicians worldwide to continue contributing to healthcare policy development and healthcare systems change, as the medical landscape continues to evolve.

His [inaugural address](#), delivered at the World Medical Association General Assembly in Helsinki, focused on the necessity of the medical profession to stay actively engaged in the evolution of healthcare delivery and health systems, to ensure the best outcomes for patients and to safeguard professional autonomy.



Dr Ashok Philip, World Medical Association President 2024-2025

Dr Philip told physicians present in Helsinki that while policy and planning could be seen as be tedious work and “take us away from direct patient care, but in the long term it protects our patients, and that is what we have sworn to do.”

Dr Ashok Philip is a specialist in Internal Medicine, currently practising in the private sector in Malaysia. He is a Past President of the Malaysian Medical Association. Within WMA he has been a member of the workgroup on governance reform and the advocacy committee, which he chaired. Dr Philip is a representative of the Pacific region on the World Medical Association Council.

In his inaugural address as WMA President, Dr Philip detailed threats to the professional

autonomy of physicians, threats which have been exacerbated by increasing healthcare costs as life expectancy increases.

“Professional autonomy means primarily the freedom to make clinical decisions about the care of individual patients. This is what most of us think of when we mention autonomy, and in my opinion is the aspect most under threat,” said Dr Ashok Philip, President of the World Medical Association 2024-2025. “If we let this autonomy be taken away or diminished, our patients will suffer.”



On efforts to reduce healthcare budgets Dr Philip stated, “Issues of accessibility and rationing may arise, and again it is our responsibility to bring evidence to the table to help guide policymakers in making their decisions. We must also be alert for the intrusion of political agendas into healthcare.”

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Dr Ashok Philip, President of the World Medical Association, 2024-2025

He continued, “We should very carefully consider if profit seeking as seen in the commercial arena should be allowed free rein in medical situations. Nobody chooses to get sick. Patients have little choice but to take the treatments available.”

Dr Philip stressed the importance of guidelines, independent of purely financial considerations, to decide how patients are treated, and said that these guidelines must be drawn up by physicians. He said that steps towards removing or excluding physicians from healthcare delivery teams, ostensibly to handle shortages of medical professionals, but as cost cutting measures, must be

resisted.

“The natural leaders in healthcare should be those who can look at the whole picture, and that generally means doctors. It is not in the best interests of patients individually or systems as a whole that physicians be removed from their leadership roles.”

As he begins his year as President of the World Medical Association, representing more than

nine million physicians worldwide, Dr Philip calls on medical professionals to lead the way to a better future for patients, communities and the profession.

In her [Valedictory address](#), outgoing WMA President Dr Lujain AlQodmani, highlighted the immense challenges that physicians today face. “Conflicts rage, climate change, economic crises and violations of human rights continue,” said Dr AlQodmani.

She continued, “This year, healthcare has faced immense dangers, with over 980 attacks reported by the WHO surveillance system in conflict areas such as Lebanon, Ukraine, Sudan, and Gaza. Doctors from Kenya to Korea, the UK to India, are taking to the streets demanding safer working environments. These are not isolated incidents; they are cries for systemic change, for respect, and for their right to serve their moral duty.”

Dr AlQodmani noted the role of WMA in fostering international collaboration to advance progress to attain the sustainable development goals (SDGs) particularly Universal Health Coverage, ensuring that health remains a right, not a privilege.

“As physicians, our duty is not just to our patients but to the health and well-being of all. No matter how bleak the world may seem, we must not lose our passion for this duty,” urged Dr Lujain AlQodmani, Immediate Past President of the World Medical Association.

On a personal note, Dr AlQodmani said that as only the fifth woman to be elected President of the World Medical Association in 77 years, she was deeply aware of the honour and the responsibility of representing so many others who still lack a seat at the table. Balancing duties as a mother and as president was not always easy, she said, adding that these challenges only strengthened her resolve to create a more inclusive and equitable environment.

Dr AlQodmani is currently the Chief Action Officer at EAT. She has served as a council member of the World Medical Association, a member of the WMA governance workgroup, as well as co-chair of the WMA Environment Caucus. Previously Dr AlQodmani held the position of International Relations Director of the Kuwait Medical Association.

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