

# **ENSURING EFFECTIVE ACCESS TO ESSENTIAL MEDICINES IN THAI UHC**

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**“Drug system challenges:  
Access to medicines and the effect of  
political economy”**

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The views expressed therein are the author's alone.

# 1. Politics, economics and diplomacy

- Politics is about finding solutions to (often) opposing wishes.
- Economics is about “optimizing” choices.
- Diplomacy is about balancing various factors to promote and protect national interests, based on international relations.

## 2. Conventional thoughts

- “Rich” (developed) countries do not facilitate access to (reasonably priced) medicines because their private companies spend so much on R&D and need to recoup that cost from high prices.
- “Poor” (developing) countries do not have capacity to innovate/produce all essential medicines by themselves.

### 3. Changes to conventional wisdom

- Some developing countries are becoming producers of medicines. Their positions in negotiations are becoming less opposing to traditional (incumbent) drug producers.
- Some developed countries whose governments have to pay high prices for medicines, e.g. as part of their health coverage, find it necessary to reduce distortions in markets for medicines too. Their positions are sometimes aligned with other developing countries.

## 4. At the World Health Assembly

- Area of work covers interaction between World Health Organization (WHO), World Trade Organization (WTO) and World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO)
- Global Strategy and Plan of Action on Public Health, Innovation and Intellectual Property (GSPA - PHI) is the framework in which Member States of the WHO “work” to promote the application of TRIPs flexibilities
- A review panel of 18 experts was set up in 2015 and submitted its recommendations in 2017.

## 5. Review Panel

- A review panel of 18 experts was set up in 2015 and submitted its recommendations in 2017.
- 71st World Health Assembly Decision (WHA71(9)) taking forward the review panel's recommendations, to be reported in the World Health Assembly this year (WHA73)

## 6. Three recommendations from review panel (out of 33 priorities)

- Recommendation 4: MS to support the WHO Secretariat in promoting transparency in, and understanding of, the costs of research and development.
- Recommendation 27: MS to identify essential medicines that are at risk of being in short supply and mechanisms to avoid shortages, and disseminate related information accordingly.
- Recommendation 28: MS to commit to dedicating at least 0.01% of their gross domestic product to basic and applied research relevant to the health needs of developing countries.

## 7.

- 72nd World Health Assembly Resolution “Improving the transparency of markets for medicines, vaccines and other health products” (WHA72.8)

## 8.The long view...

“Diplomacy is about surviving until the next century - politics is about surviving until Friday afternoon.”

Sir Humphrey Appleby, Yes Prime Minister, “A Victory for Democracy” (1986)