

# Global equity in access to healthcare information: a call to action



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The COVID pandemic highlighted existing inequities in the global evidence ecosystem. As recorded in the Cochrane Convenes report, “the evidence response has... been unequal – across sectors, countries, regions and populations” (1). Cochrane issued a Call to Action (2) to improve evidence-informed decision-making in preparation for future health crises.

Our IFLA E4GDH SIG session during the 88th IFLA (International Federation of Library Associations) World Library and Information Congress in Rotterdam last month took this further, discussing equitable access to reliable healthcare information as part of human rights. The panel discussion brought together some key organisations striving to remove existing barriers to universal healthcare information - Healthcare Information For All (HIFA), the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) and Research4Life, alongside initiatives undertaken by IFLA Headquarters.

“Global equity in access to health information is an ambitious goal but it can be achieved if all stakeholders work together.” Dr Neil Pakenham-Walsh

Dr Neil Pakenham-Walsh, coordinator of HIFA, argued that universal access can only be achieved if all stakeholders work together to better understand and strengthen the global evidence ecosystem. HIFA is now in official relations with the World Health Organization (WHO) (3). The first step is a global consultation to accelerate progress towards universal access to reliable healthcare information. It is no coincidence that this survey was officially launched on 21st August 2023, the opening day of this year’s IFLA congress. The goal is to demonstrate massive public support for universal access, and to gather inputs from all stakeholders on how to accelerate progress and what more WHO can do. Librarians and information professionals are an important voice.

### How can EAHIL support this work?

We invite EAHIL colleagues to take 5 minutes to complete the survey (available in multiple languages), and to promote it within their organisations.

**Complete the survey:** [www.hifa.org/survey2023](http://www.hifa.org/survey2023) (available until 30 September)

**Further information:** <https://www.hifa.org/projects/hifa-who-global-consultation-2023>

this includes a communication brief and promotional materials.

**Financial support for the survey is also welcome:** <https://hifa.online-donation.co.uk/consultation>

IFLA E4GDH SIG works to promote and strengthen the roles that librarians play in times of disaster and in response to global health challenges. This is achieved through our advocacy work, skills development, and signposting of high-quality resources in support of evidence-based practice. Do get in touch to find out more about our work. We also welcome volunteers to join our advisory team and contribute to various projects. Our email: E4GDHteam@gmail.com. Our webpages: <https://www.ifla.org/units/e4gdh/>.

### REFERENCES

1. Cochrane. Cochrane Convenes: Preparing for and responding to global health emergencies. What have we learnt from COVID-19? Reflections and recommendations from the evidence synthesis community. London: Cochrane; 2022. p. 2.  
[https://convenes.cochrane.org/sites/convenes.cochrane.org/files/uploads/Cochrane\\_LP\\_23Jan.pdf](https://convenes.cochrane.org/sites/convenes.cochrane.org/files/uploads/Cochrane_LP_23Jan.pdf)
2. Cochrane. Cochrane Convenes: Call to Action. 2022. <https://convenes.cochrane.org/call-action>
3. Healthcare Information for All. HIFA-WHO Global Consultation 2023. <https://www.hifa.org/projects/hifa-who-global-consultation-2023>