



**Alzheimer's Disease
International**

The global voice on dementia

57a Great Suffolk Street
London SE1 0BB
United Kingdom

Tel: +44 (0)20 7981 0880
Email: info@alzint.org
Web: www.alzint.org

Bureau of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Body
World Health Organization
Av. Appia 20,
1211 Genève
Switzerland

02 December 2022

Re: WHO convention, agreement, or other international instrument on pandemic prevention, preparedness and response

Dear Bureau of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Body

Older persons, including those living with dementia, were disproportionately and significantly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. As a collective of organisations advocating for the human rights and needs of older persons, including those living with dementia, we are concerned that the opportunity to specifically prepare and build in future resilience for these vulnerable constituencies, is not being adequately reflected in the current draft agreement. We therefore urge Member States and the International Negotiating Body (INB) to act to rectify this in the next draft of the pandemic treaty, so that the errors that played out during the COVID-19 pandemic and led to unprecedented rates of mortality and morbidity in these populations are not repeated in the future.

Although far from comprehensive, country level mortality data from the COVID-19 pandemic for older people and those living with dementia demonstrated the brutal societal and economic impact. In Canada, of all COVID-19 deaths in 2020, dementia or Alzheimer's was reported on 36 per cent of death certificates⁽¹⁾; in Australia dementia constituted 41% of all COVID-19 deaths⁽²⁾; 28% in Scotland⁽³⁾; 25% in England and Wales⁽⁴⁾ and an estimated 16% in Italy⁽⁵⁾. Further to these shocking statistics, the WHO estimates that 85% of the 'excess' mortality during the pandemic has been in low- and middle-income countries, totalling a staggering 12.7 million deaths. Almost the same percentage of these deaths (83%) have been among older people⁽⁶⁾.

Also troubling, was the implementation of clinical guidance by some Member States to deprioritise access for older persons, especially those with dementia or other morbidities to ventilators; in addition to performing non-rights-based triage decisions⁽⁷⁾. These unparalleled actions clearly demonstrate an urgent need to protect older persons in the current and future pandemics and to ensure that this vulnerable constituency is specifically included in future pandemic preparedness and resilience.

We therefore write to you, as organisations seeking to build future resilience for these vulnerable and disproportionately affected groups, to ensure that the proposed instrument is equipped to protect

these constituencies in future pandemics and health emergencies, to ensure a rights based, non-ageist approach to triage; has a robust and consistent approach to infection control in long-term care facilities; indicates proportionate restrictions; has concrete measures for the continuation of essential diagnostic and treatment and rehabilitation pathways; access to palliative care; and essential recording of emergency or pandemic related mortality and morbidity.

Through these measures we hope to ensure that older people and those living with dementia are treated equally in times of crisis, and perhaps most importantly, we do not once again have to face the shocking and shameful mortality figures observed during COVID-19 pandemic.

Signatories:



**Alzheimer's Disease
International**

The global voice on dementia



References:

- (1) <https://globalnews.ca/news/7864287/dementia-alzheimers-covid-deaths/>
- (2) <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC9011540/>
- (3) <https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/statistics/2022/02/excess-deaths-causes-dementia-setting-scotland-2020-2021/documents/excess-deaths-causes-involving-dementia-underlying-cause-scotland-2020-2021/excess-deaths-causes-involving-dementia-underlying-cause-scotland-2020-2021/govscot%3Adocument/excess-deaths-causes-involving-dementia-underlying-cause-scotland-2020-2021.pdf>
- (4) <https://www.alzheimers.org.uk/blog/research-UK-biggest-killer-high-dementia-deaths>
- (5) <https://alz-journals.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/dad2.12114>
- (6) <https://www.helpage.org/newsroom/latest-news/covid-millions-of-older-people-have-been-dying-without-being-counted/>
- (7) <https://ltccovid.org/2020/03/27/when-the-ambulances-dont-turn-up-implications-of-the-covid19-hospital-triage-protocols-for-nursing-homes-in-madrid/>