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A Global Movement Takes Shape – Physical Activity, Health, and the New Era of Responsibility: "Global Alliance for Promotion of Physical Activity"

Eine globale Bewegung nimmt Gestalt an – Sport, Gesundheit und die neue Ära der Verantwortung: „Globale Allianz zur Förderung der körperlichen Aktivität"

EDITORIAL

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In an era marked by rising lifestyle-related, chronic disease rates, social inequalities, and environmental challenges, the call for innovative, collective solutions has never been louder (1). Against this backdrop, an unprecedented coalition of sports medicine, public health, academia, and policy actors has joined forces under the banner of a global movement to reshape how societies view and implement physical activity and sport as a pillar of health, well-being and human development.

The signing of the Hamburg Declaration on Precision Prevention on June 27, 2025, represents more than a ceremonial event (4). It signals the transition from scattered initiatives to a coordinated global effort, designed to embed physical activity, sports and health promotion within community systems, sport environments, and policy frameworks alike (3). This approach aims to connect scientific knowledge with practical implementation, addressing the complex health challenges societies face today, while safeguarding performance and inclusivity.

A Collective Commitment Beyond Borders

One of the defining features of this new movement is its deliberate crossing of disciplinary and geographical boundaries. Sports medicine associations across continents, in partnership with academic institutions and health organizations, have pledged to align their efforts to support the practical implementation of the Hamburg Declaration's principles. The goal is not simply to encourage more physical activity, but to build structures that allow physical activity and sports participation for all, regardless of age, gender, ability, or socio-economic status.

Turning Knowledge into Action

The Hamburg Declaration represents a call to spark a global transformation: health promotion through physical activity and sport must be fully integrated into everyday systems, rather than remaining an isolated message within the broader sports community. Only by embedding physical activity into education, healthcare, and society as a whole can we truly address the major public health challenges we face today (5).

Germany's role as a host and active contributor underscores its commitment to prevention and sustainable health promotion, ensuring that physical activity and sports is seen not as a luxury or an isolated intervention, but as a societal responsibility embedded within healthcare and education systems.

Creating a Framework for Sustainable Impact – The Global Alliance

The commitment now transitions into structured action, supported by a clear framework:

Integration Across Sectors

Healthcare systems, educational institutions, sports organizations and politics will work together to create consistent pathways from early education to lifelong physical activity and sports engagement.

Evidence-Based Interventions

Research-driven approaches will guide policies and politics, ensuring interventions are effective, scalable, and culturally adaptable.

Inclusive Design

Approaches will prioritize access for underrepresented groups, aiming to dismantle barriers to participation.

Long-Term Health Focus

Efforts will balance the pursuit of performance with the preservation of well-being throughout life, recognizing that health and high performance are not mutually exclusive.

Bridging the Gap with Global Coordination

The Global Alliance responsible for the rollout of the Hamburg Declaration recognizes that a declaration alone does not change outcomes. It is the commitment of organizations, communities, and policymakers to integrate these principles into action that will determine success.

One of the pressing challenges the Alliance has identified is the persistent gap between research findings and real-world application. Many societies face stagnation or regression in key health indicators, despite clear scientific guidance on the benefits of regular physical activity and structured sport. The Alliance aims to bridge this gap by establishing transparent systems of accountability and by supporting countries and institutions with the resources and frameworks needed to turn intentions into measurable outcomes. ›

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Sport as a Lever for Sustainable Development

The Hamburg Declaration positions sport and physical activity within the broader context of sustainable development. Health does not exist in a vacuum; it is intertwined with education, environmental sustainability, and social equity. The challenges faced by the global community in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) highlight the need for integrated solutions. When properly supported, sport and physical activity offer a promising pathway to address multiple goals simultaneously. They help reduce lifestyle-related, non-communicable diseases, improve mental health, enhance educational outcomes, and foster social cohesion.

The Role of Sports Medicine Professionals

Sports medicine professionals stand at the frontline of this transformation, tasked not only with caring for elite athletes, but also with promoting health within communities. This requires a shift in perspective, moving from a reactive model focused on injury treatment to a proactive, preventive approach that incorporates exercise as a core component of health systems.

By leveraging their expertise, sports physicians can advocate for structural changes within healthcare, emphasizing the role of movement in disease prevention and management, while contributing to public health literacy around the benefits of an active lifestyle.

Research as the Engine of Change

Continued research will be essential to guide this movement. Studies that examine the impact of physical activity interventions across different populations, environments, and age groups will inform policies that are not only effective but equitable (2). Academic institutions, through their research and teaching functions, will play a pivotal role in ensuring that the next generation of healthcare and sports professionals are equipped to advance these goals.

Engaging Communities and Athletes

The Hamburg Declaration acknowledges the vital role that communities and athletes themselves play in advancing the movement. Athletes serve as role models, and their participation in promoting health messages can inspire broader societal change. Simultaneously, community-based initiatives ensure that the structures and opportunities for engagement in physical activity are available to all, reducing disparities and fostering a culture where movement is a valued and accessible part of life.

A Roadmap Towards 2028 and Beyond

In the coming months, the Global Alliance will develop and share its first detailed roadmap, outlining concrete steps, timelines, and accountability measures for implementing the Hamburg Declaration's principles worldwide. This roadmap will provide institutions, governments, and communities with a guide to align their practices with the goals of the Declaration, fostering consistency while allowing flexibility for local adaptation.

This phase will be critical in maintaining momentum and ensuring that the signing of the Declaration translates into real-world impact. The commitment to transparency and collaboration will be key in ensuring stakeholders remain engaged, informed, and accountable.

Conclusion: A Moment of Reflection and Collective Responsibility

The Hamburg Declaration is a testament to what can be achieved when diverse actors unite around a shared vision. It is a recognition that physical activity and sport are not peripheral luxuries but central to health, well-being, human development, and societal resilience.

Transforming this vision into reality will require dedication, coordination, and innovation. Sports medicine professionals, policymakers, educators, athletes, and community leaders must work together, using evidence to guide practice and striving for inclusivity in every step taken.

This is not merely about increasing participation in physical activity and sport; it is about transforming systems to value and prioritize a healthy lifestyle and health, empowering individuals to take charge of their well-being, and recognizing the societal and environmental factors that enable or hinder a physically active life.

As the global community moves forward, the Hamburg Declaration serves as a beacon for a healthier, more equitable future, reminding us that, while challenges are many, the collective will to address them through action and cooperation is stronger still.

In this new era, physical activity and sport become not only medicine, but a unifying force for global health and sustainable development.

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