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## OECD Health Ministers to Discuss Ways of Improving Health Systems Paris, 12-14 May

Health ministers from OECD countries will meet in Paris on 12-14 May to review ways of ensuring that health care is accessible and high quality, and that health systems are responsive, affordable, and good value for money.

Many of the ministers will participate in the OECD Forum, at the Centre Kléber in Paris on 12-13 May, with business and labour leaders and civil society to focus attention on health issues. The findings of OECD's 3-year project on health, synthesised in a new publication, *"Towards High-performing Health Systems"* will be presented to the media at 1.15 p.m. on 12 May at the Forum.

The Health ministers will then move into the formal ministerial session on 13-14 May at OECD headquarters, where *"Towards High-performing Health Systems"* will serve as the background for their discussions.

**Journalists are also invited to a news conference at the close of the Ministerial, 12.30 p.m. on Friday 14 May, at OECD headquarters with the Chair of the Ministerial meeting, Mexican Health Minister Julio Frenk. Participants will also include the two vice-chairs, U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services Tommy G. Thompson and Hungary's Minister of Health, Social and Family Affairs, Mihaly Kökény, and OECD Secretary-General Donald Johnston.**

Participants in the Ministerial meeting will address fundamental questions common to all countries: What can be done to ensure that spending on health is affordable today and sustainable tomorrow? What is needed to improve the quality and safety of health care, and to ensure that health systems are responsive to the needs of patients and other stakeholders? How should equitable and timely access to necessary care be supported? And perhaps the most challenging question of all: what can be done to increase value for money?

Ministers will discuss initiatives to improve public health through prevention, for example by cutting tobacco and alcohol abuse, reducing traffic accidents and encouraging exercise and healthy eating habits. They will also consider such issues as waiting times for operations, inequitable access to health services, and ways to reduce unnecessary treatment and promote best practice in health care. They will seek to identify policies which encourage the medical advances that are raising people's health and life expectancy. At the same time, they will discuss whether greater productivity and efficiency will be able to hold down costs in the face of increasing demand for sophisticated and expensive treatments.

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Some OECD countries already have a shortage of nurses and physicians, and many others foresee future needs for more medical staff to cope with an ageing population and increasing demand for new medical inventions. To meet this challenge, countries are experimenting with new training, funding and hiring policies. Ministers will examine which policies have helped to boost numbers of healthcare workers and which policies have failed to work.

They will also review the role of private health insurance in financing the cost of health care, and the regulatory framework needed to ensure affordable protection for all who need it, regardless of income levels, age, or health status.

**12 May at Forum 2004**

10:30 - 12:00 - Health, Human Rights and Development; and Obesity and Health  
13:15 - 14:15 - Media briefing to introduce "Towards High-performing Health Systems"  
14:30 - 16:00 - Ageing and Health  
17:00 - 18:30 - Equity and Access to Health Care

**13 May at Forum 2004**

10:30 - 12:30 - Ministers' Roundtable on Research and Innovations to Improve Health Systems  
14:00 - 15:30 - E-Health and the Informed Patient  
16:00 - 18:00 - Combating Infectious Diseases

**OECD Health Ministerial at OECD headquarters, begins 13 May**

15:00 - Ministerial opens with remarks from OECD Secretary General Donald Johnston and Chair, Julio Frenk, Minister of Health for Mexico. 5-minute photo op for cameras and photographers.

**14 May**

12:30 - 13:15 - Closing news conference given by Ministerial Chair Julio Frenk, Health Minister of Mexico; Tommy Thompson, U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services; Mihaly Kökény, Hungarian Minister of Health, Social and Family Affairs; and OECD Secretary General Donald Johnston.

Further information about the OECD Health Ministerial can be found at: [www.oecd.org/healthmin2004](http://www.oecd.org/healthmin2004) and about the Forum at: [www.oecd.org/forum2004](http://www.oecd.org/forum2004). Journalists can register for both events through the online registration form at: <http://webnet3.oecd.org/forumonline/frmregistration.aspx?type=j>

For further information, journalists are invited to contact the OECD Media Relations Division (tel: [33] 1 45 24 97 00). For further information about the Health Ministerial meeting, journalists are invited to contact Helen Fisher (tel. [33] 1 45 24 80 97 or [helen.fisher@oecd.org](mailto:helen.fisher@oecd.org)). For further information about the Forum, journalists should contact Meggan Dissly (tel. [33] 1 45 24 80 94 or [meggan.dissly@oecd.org](mailto:meggan.dissly@oecd.org)).