

# Reforming Global Health Law to Respond to Pandemic Threats



Consortium of Universities for Global Health  
March 30, 2022



## GLOBAL HEALTH LAW CONSORTIUM

**The Global Health Law Consortium (GHLC) is a collaborative interdisciplinary research initiative focused on advancing global health law.**

Global health law describes the legal institutions that structure global health. In a globalizing world, connecting societies in shared vulnerability and highlighting the limitations of domestic law, global health law offers the promise and opportunity of bridging national boundaries through public international law to alleviate health inequities around the world. The Global Health Law Consortium brings together academics in the field to:

1. develop the academic field of global health law and mentor emerging scholars in the field;
2. provide authoritative interpretations of legal instruments in global health; and
3. facilitate global health law research projects that draw on collaborative scholarship.



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# Revising the International Health Regulations Global Health Security Agenda Legal Preparedness Action Package Developing a Pandemic Treaty

## Introducing Global Health Law

### Global Health Law

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Global health law describes the legal frameworks that structure global health. Laws and regulations, when based on the best available evidence, can promote healthy behaviors, regulate hazardous activities, and ensure socially responsible corporate marketing and products. These regulatory frameworks operate in virtually every realm of health, including infectious and noncommunicable diseases, mental health, injuries, and the safety and effectiveness of vaccines, pharmaceuticals, and medical products. Law can help structure universally affordable, accessible, and equitable health systems that promote universal health coverage. Beyond discrete attention to health risks, the rule of law and good governance are crucial for ensuring health and well-being.

Where global health has come to frame efforts to advance public health across countries, law has become crucial to addressing the global health threats that have arisen in a rapidly globalizing world. Globalization has unleashed the spread of disease, connected societies in shared vulnerability, and highlighted the limitations of domestic law in ensuring global determinants of health. In this interconnected world, no country acting alone can stem health hazards that go beyond national borders. Yet if globalization has presented challenges to disease prevention and health promotion, global health law offers the promise of bridging national boundaries to advance global norms and alleviate health inequities. Arising out of international health law — which has long structured

multilateral cooperation to respond to infectious disease threats — global health law seeks to structure the contemporary governance architecture for global health. In responding to health harms throughout the world, global health law has “evol[ve]d beyond its traditional confines of formal sources and subjects of international law” to advance global health with justice.<sup>1</sup> This focus on global health has necessitated action beyond the reach of national governments, requiring both state and non-state actors to come together to respond to globalized health threats. Global health law seeks to frame this new governance to respond to the major health challenges of the twenty-first century.

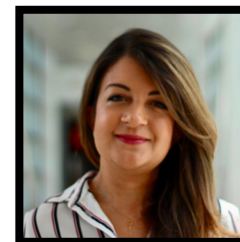
The field of global health law has thus become a basis to conceptualize the legal institutions that apply to the changing public health threats, non-state actors, and regulatory norms that structure global health. Beyond the traditional purview of international health law, global health law describes evolving legal efforts to address:

- New health threats — including non-communicable disease, injuries, mental health, dangerous products, and other globalized health threats,
- New health actors — including transnational corporations, private philanthropists, civil society, and other non-state actors, and
- New health norms — including “soft law” instruments, global strat-

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JOURNAL OF LAW, MEDICINE & ETHICS  
The Journal of Law, Medicine & Ethics, 47 (2019): 788-795. © 2019 The Author(s)  
DOI: 10.1215/00141801-2019-007794

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