

# Anne Lévy - Director-General, Federal Office of Public Health (FOPH), Switzerland

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*As part of the Federal Department of Home Affairs, the Federal Office of Public Health (FOPH) is responsible for public health in Switzerland; developing the country's health policy and working to create an efficient and affordable healthcare system in the long term. PharmaBoardroom recently sat down with the FOPH's newly appointed director-general Anne Lévy to discuss starting such an important role amid a pandemic, her strategic priorities beyond COVID-19, and ensuring affordable access to innovative treatments in Switzerland.*

**Starting such a critical role as Director-General of the FOPH during a pandemic must have been challenging to say the least! How are you handling the task at hand?**

I took up office in an exceptional period for the FOPH. It has been an unprecedented crisis. However, I was fortunate enough to be able to rely on a very competent and committed team. Realising that the crisis would last longer than expected, I quickly took organisational steps to ensure that the teams would be able to respond over time to the enormous challenges they faced.

**Apart from dealing with the current pandemic, what strategic areas would you like the FOPH to focus on during your mandate?**

Managing the COVID-19 crisis will remain top priority in months ahead. In the longer term, the Swiss healthcare system will have to address several challenges in order to continue offering the best possible treatments to the entire population.

The health status of the Swiss population is very good compared to other countries. However, there is still potential to reduce the risk of developing diseases that can shorten or adversely affect the quality of life. Let me mention just a few examples: smoking still kills nearly 9,500 of our fellow citizens every year; the number of people who are obese has remained stable since 2012; and there is also the increasing prevalence of mental illness which constitutes a major challenge, in particular due to the ageing of the population.

The Federal Council has adopted a Health2030 strategy that sets out the priorities for health policy over the ten next years. While technological and digital change will remain our top priority, this strategy focusses on three other key challenges: demographic and social trends, preserving high-quality and financially sustainable healthcare coverage and creating opportunities for a healthy life. Each of these four challenges encompasses a large number of objectives to be achieved.

**Innovation is one of Switzerland's key characteristics as a life science nation. However, ensuring that Swiss patients can access innovative treatments as quickly as their counterparts in other modern nations seems to be a major concern for stakeholders in your country. How is the FOPH helping to ensure that Swiss patients can receive innovative treatments in an affordable manner? What are your expectations for other participants in the healthcare system such as drug manufacturers and health insurers to help facilitate this process?**

Guaranteeing access to the most innovative treatments for everyone is a major public health concern. However, we must be clear: demographic changes and technical progress mean that healthcare costs will continue to rise in the future. The Federal Council's aim is to ensure that cost increases are limited to what is medically justifiable. It has adopted two packages of cost-containment measures that affect many areas such as the price of medicines, coordinated care and system transparency. The Swiss Parliament will decide on the measures to be taken.

By working together, we – the pharmaceutical industry, the health insurers and the FOPH – can create rapid, equal access to reimbursement for innovative drugs at affordable prices for all patients in Switzerland. I am optimistic and hope that we will achieve this in the future.

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