



Public Lecture by Sir (Dr.) Jeremy Farrar, WHO Chief Scientist

09 February 2024, UZH main hall (Aula), 18:00

Welcome Address by the President of UZH (check against delivery)

Distinguished guests

Dear colleagues and students

Ladies and gentlemen

A warm welcome to the University of Zurich! It is an honor and a pleasure to extend a few words to you on this special occasion. Tonight, we will focus on a topic that affects us all – whether as researchers, students, or non-academics – and is often described as the most important thing in life: health.

A famous previous speaker in this lecture hall, Winston Churchill, is reported to have said that “**healthy citizens are the greatest asset any country can have.**” In a world where well-known diseases such as malaria, but also new pathogens threaten global health, I think that we still have to agree with Winston Churchill today – and invest even more in promoting health worldwide.

At the University of Zurich, we have a long tradition of promoting public health and medicine: The Faculty of Medicine is one of the four founding



faculties that have been part of the University of Zurich since 1833¹, the year UZH was founded.

Today, we are among the world leaders in medicine and the life sciences. We are particularly committed to the transfer of knowledge from basic research into medical and health practice – or otherwise speaking, translational approaches are key to us. Within our academic medicine network, the University of Zurich brings together four university hospitals as well as next door neighbor, the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology, short ETH. This unique combination of academic and clinical expertise with state-of-the-art infrastructure puts us in an excellent position to manage medical challenges. Be it in the field of research, healthcare, or prevention.

In various areas, we have interfaces with the World Health Organization, the expert organization for global health promotion, so to speak. Four of 17 WHO Collaborating Centers in Switzerland are currently based at the University of Zurich². In addition, several researchers of our institution work as consultants for the World Health Organization. Their areas of work often extend far beyond the field of medicine and are characterized by an interdisciplinary, globally networked approach. As president, I am proud of our collaboration with WHO, as it underlines the global relevance of our research and our commitment to the well-being of societies worldwide.

¹ <https://www.uzh.ch/cmsssl/de/explore/portrait/history.html>, zuletzt geöffnet am 30.01.24.

² Collaborating Center (CC) for Traveller's Health, CC on Physical Activity for Health, CC for Bioethics and CC for Substance Abuse (bei letzterem handelt es sich um ein assoziiertes Institut der UZH.)



I am therefore particularly pleased to introduce to you Sir Jeremy Farrar, our keynote speaker who knows more about global health and health promotion than most of us.

Sir Jeremy took over as WHO Chief Scientist last year. Prior to joining the World Health Organization, he was Director of the Wellcome Trust, where he implemented a series of important reforms over the last nine years. These have had a decisive influence on international cooperation and Wellcome's focus on fundamental discovery research. Before that, Sir Jeremy spent over 17 years as Director of the Clinical Research Unit at the Hospital for Tropical Diseases in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. There he focused on integrated health research across a broad range of infectious diseases, including influenza, malaria, or dengue fever, to mention only a few.

It would go far beyond the scope of my speech to list all the exciting and important steps in Sir Jeremy's career. I bet, you are all here to hear *him* speak in person, not me.

But allow me just one more thing: on behalf of the University of Zurich, I would like to express our gratitude to Sir Jeremy for agreeing to speak to us today. In view of what must be a packed agenda, this is anything but a matter of course.

Sir Jeremy, thank you very much for being here! I hope you enjoy your stay at the University of Zurich. The floor is yours.