



# Liming Li, Hua Wang, and Hongbing Shen, among many others, Call for the Establishment of “National Public Health Day” in China

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Sixteen experts, including Liming Li, Hua Wang, and Hongbing Shen, recently called for the establishment of “National Public Health Day” in China, which has attracted widespread attention, rapidly reprinted by many media including WeChat Official Accounts of *China Science Daily*, Jiangsu Provincial Center for Disease Control and Prevention, *Chinese Journal of Epidemiology*, etc. Following is the full text of their statement.

## Proposal for Establishing the National Public Health Day

Countries around the world use commemorative days (e.g., Teacher’s Day and AIDS Day) to mark landmark occasions or significant events of a nation or of all humankind to evoke public awareness and seek extensive support and participation.

The COVID-19 outbreak that began in Wuhan, China, late December 2019, has uncovered the long-standing shortcomings of the public health systems in China and around the world. The establishment of a “National Public Health Day” at this moment not only is to commemorate the war against this disastrous epidemic but also represents the best timing to evoke further the idea of “public health for all” and raise awareness for health and safety among the general public; such an event will be one of the best means for accelerating the construction of Healthy China and promoting healthier lifestyles. Our proposal is based on the following justifications:

(I) The rare COVID-19 outbreak beginning at the end of 2019 is a significant event in the history of public health in modern China. The Chinese

government has responded to the epidemic quickly and decisively. In particular, the city of Wuhan, the epicenter of the outbreak, was locked down on January 23rd, 2020. Such a measure taken in a metropolis with tens of millions of residents was an unprecedented effort to stop the outbreak. It quickly and effectively curbed the spread of the disease in China and meanwhile drastically lowered the risk of exporting COVID-19 cases to other countries and territories, earning valuable time for global preparation and prevention of COVID-19. It reflects the responsibility and commitment of the Chinese government in safeguarding public health in China and worldwide. Thus, January 23rd should be recorded in the annals of history as it demonstrates the determination, courage, and wisdom of the heroic Chinese people and its government when facing such a massive disaster in the new century.

(II) Coincidentally, it was also on January 23, 18 years ago, the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention (China CDC), with its modern mission and vision, was grandly established in the Great Hall of the People in Beijing in 2002. The establishment of this Great Hall was one of the significant public health milestones in China. It set up a banner displaying China’s “prevention-oriented” health strategy and marked China’s strategic transition in public health from the prevention of infectious diseases to integrated health promotion. This was a day worthy of a special commemoration for the development of

public health in China.

- (III) Health and longevity are the eternal pursuits of humankind. The development of public health is not a temporary goal but the long-term priority of a country and a nation. The Patriotic Health Campaign in the 1950s once was a shining icon of China's public health in the world stage. Today, the public health system in China urgently requires optimization or reconstruction, and more than ever needs the cultural and social support. Adopting January 23rd as the "National Public Health Day" can once again arouse the public awareness about health and integrate public health ideas into the social culture, making healthy lifestyles and behaviors become regular practices among the general public. The "National Public Health Day" will also be an essential measure to accelerate the construction of a healthy China, implement the Healthy China Action Plan, and embody the solemn commitment of the Chinese government to public health. It will become one of China's unique contributions to global health governance.

We now solemnly propose that January 23 shall be set up as the "National Public Health Day" in China.

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