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Global guidance framework for responsible use of life sciences

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Intended as the go-to starting point for the development and strengthening of biorisk management



The World Health Organisation (WHO) has issued the Global guidance framework for the responsible use of the life sciences. The Framework calls on leaders and other stakeholders to mitigate biorisks and safely govern dual-use research, which has a clear benefit but can be misused to harm humans, other animals, agriculture and the environment.

This is the first global, technical and normative framework for informing the development of national frameworks and approaches for mitigating biorisks and governing dual-use research. It aims to safely unlock the great promise for new and improved ways to improve global health offered by life sciences and related technologies.

The Framework addresses the decades-long challenges of preventing the accidental and deliberate misuse of biology and other life sciences, as well as how to manage governance and oversight to both accelerate and spread innovation, while mitigating negative impacts.

The life sciences are increasingly crossing over with other fields, such as chemistry, artificial intelligence and nanotechnology, which changes the landscape of risks, with those that span multiple sectors and disciplines more likely to be missed.

Looking at how to manage the increasing pace of advances in the life sciences, the Framework outlines the need for anticipatory and responsive governance mechanisms, including foresight approaches, which are participatory and multi-disciplinary ways of exploring trends, emerging changes, systemic impacts and alternative futures.