



MEDIA RELEASE

Health Professions unite to issue warning on global epidemic of non-communicable diseases

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The world's health professions warned today that the global epidemic of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) had become a significant threat to human health and development and unless urgently addressed, the burden of NCDs would continue its dramatic increase.

In launching a new campaign, the World Health Professions WHPA, representing more than 26 million health professionals in 130 countries, declared that non-communicable diseases should be viewed in a holistic way as a combined threat to global health.

In a joint statement, the global leaders of nurses, pharmacists, physical therapists, dentists and physicians, said what is needed is a single strategy to prevent and manage non-communicable diseases. NCDs – including cardiovascular disease, some cancers, chronic respiratory diseases, diabetes, mental disorders and oral disease – accounted for more than 60 percent of global deaths, killing 36 million people in 2008, many prematurely.

Nearly 80 per cent of these deaths occurred in low and middle income countries. Mental disorders, including depression, affect and are affected by NCDs. Oral diseases, including dental caries, periodontal disease and oral cancer, are neglected but important NCDs with a significant burden on overall health.

The WHPA statement emphasised that the four main risk factors are tobacco use, unhealthy diet, physical inactivity and harmful use of alcohol. To make a meaningful reduction in NCDs it is necessary to take action on the broader factors influencing health behaviours, the conditions in which we are born, grow, live, work and age, and the influence of society. It is crucial to tackle the social determinants of health that contribute to the increase in the NCD burden.

The CEOs of the five WHPA partner organizations, representing 26 million health professionals worldwide, have spoken out on this issue.

Jean-Luc Eiselé, Executive Director, FDI World Dental Federation, said, "In preparation for the UN High Level Meeting on NCDs in September 2011, this WHPA NCD advocacy and awareness raising campaign will address the importance of positive individual behavioural changes and support national interventions targeting social determinants of health."

"WHPA is highlighting the importance of a health system built on a primary health care model and including prevention, rehabilitation and specialised health services, as vital if the NCD epidemic is to be tackled," said Mr. Ton Hoek, General Secretary and CEO, International Pharmaceutical Federation (FIP).

Adding his support, Dr. Otmar Kloiber, Secretary General, World Medical Association, stated, "Attention must be paid to the social determinants of health that contribute to the increase in the NCD burden, especially access to health care, changes in lifestyles, housing issues and gender-related inequalities."

David Benton, Chief Executive Officer, International Council of Nurses, continued, "Health professionals and the national health systems in which they work have a significant role to play in raising patient and public awareness about NCD risk factors."

"Specifically health professionals can support patients and the public to avoid tobacco use and harmful alcohol consumption, improve diet, undertake regular sufficient physical activity, achieve and maintain healthy weight, aim for optimal mental health, manage tension and stress, and access preventive care and screening for preventable illness," said Brenda Myers, Secretary General, World Confederation for Physical Therapy (WCPT).

The WHPA NCD campaign is supported by the International Federation of Pharmaceutical Manufacturers & Associations (IFPMA). "We are delighted to support the World Health Professional Alliance (WHPA) on this new NCDs prevention campaign," said Eduardo Pisani, Director General, IFPMA. "Many of the cases of death and disability caused by NCDs can be prevented by changes in lifestyle. It is therefore critical to put considerable efforts into prevention programs. WHPA's members are pivotal in raising awareness of risk factors, contributing to increased health literacy, providing guidance on healthy lifestyle choices, encouraging early screening, and making early diagnoses of NCDs," Mr Pisani added.

The WHPA Joint Statement on NCDs and Social Determinants of Health said that the global crisis in human resources for health was a significant barrier to reducing the NCD burden in many countries, although it added that prevention and treatment of NCDs was cost-effective.

Link to the [WHPA Joint Statement on NCDs and Social Determinants of Health](#)

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The International Council of Nurses (ICN) is a federation of national nurses associations, representing the more than 13 million nurses working worldwide. www.icn.ch

The International Pharmaceutical Federation (FIP) is the global federation of national organisations of pharmacists and pharmaceutical scientists representing more than two million pharmacists around the world. www.fip.org

The World Confederation for Physical Therapy (WCPT), the global voice for physical therapists / physiotherapists, has 101 national member organisations representing over 350,000 members of the profession. www.wcpt.org

The FDI World Dental Federation (FDI) is a federation of approximately 200 national dental associations and specialist groups representing more than one million dentists worldwide. www.fdiworldental.org

The World Medical Association (WMA) is the global federation of national medical associations from around the world, directly and indirectly representing the views of more than nine million physicians. www.wma.net

The **International Federation of Pharmaceutical Manufacturers & Associations (IFPMA)** is the global non-profit NGO representing the research-based pharmaceutical industry, including the biotech and vaccine sectors. www.ifpma.org