



MEDIA RELEASE

Health professions launch practical NCD guide for everyone to improve their health

WHPA Health Improvement Card aims to reduce the 36 million¹ a year burden from noncommunicable diseases

Geneva, Switzerland, 12 September, 2011

The world's health professions have launched an easy-to-use, practical guide to help individuals and their health professionals reduce the risk of noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) – conditions which currently account for 60% of global deaths¹. The WHPA Health Improvement Card consists of a health scorecard, with “how to” explanatory guides for individuals and health professionals.

This is part of efforts by the World Health Professions Alliance WHPA to reduce the burden of noncommunicable diseases worldwide. WHPA represents 26 million nurses, pharmacists, physical therapists, dentists and physicians across 130 countries. It is concerned by the global epidemic of noncommunicable disease – such as cardiovascular disease, cancers, chronic respiratory diseases, diabetes, mental disorders and oral diseases – because it represents a significant threat to human health and social and economic development.

“What has been missing from the global stage up to now is a vehicle to empower both patients and individuals to take responsibility for improving their health,” said WHPA spokesperson Jean-Luc Eiselé, Chief Executive Officer, FDI World Dental Federation. “The WHPA Health Improvement Card does just that. It has been developed by health professionals with input from patients, health partners, and the WHO, to educate individuals on positive behaviour and lifestyle changes.”

“It is a simple, universal educational tool which allows everyone to assess and record their lifestyle/ behavioural and biometric risk factors. It helps individuals and their health professional take a proactive approach to prevent NCDs and associated disability.”

The information obtained through the card can help individuals and health professionals develop interventions to address individuals’ risk factors and actively improve their health and well-being. They are shown how to:

- avoid tobacco use and harmful alcohol consumption
- improve diet
- undertake regular sufficient physical activity
- achieve and maintain healthy weight
- manage tension and stress
- access preventive care and screening for preventable illness.

For more information about the WHPA NCD campaign please see www.whpa.org/ncd_campaign.htm or send an email to whpa.ncd@wma.net

¹ *Global status report on noncommunicable diseases 2010*. Geneva, World Health Organization, 2011

Additional information about WHPA's stance on noncommunicable disease (NCDs)

WHPA welcomes the attention that is now being given to NCDs and the recognition that they are major contributors to the global burden of disease. A United Nations high level meeting on NCDs will be held in New York on 19-20 September.

WHPA has been concerned about the discussions in the lead up to the meeting, which have had a narrow focus on four disease groups – cardiovascular disease, cancer, diabetes and chronic respiratory disease. It believes there is a risk that governments will concentrate only on improving in these areas, detracting from other major NCD threats such as musculoskeletal diseases, accidents, mental or oral diseases.

The World Health Professions Alliance WHPA advocates that discussion on NCDs should:

- Adopt a holistic approach based on common risk factors. This approach would be equally applicable to communicable diseases.
- Not restrict the scope of the outcomes document to a limited number of diseases, but include other areas, notably mental health and oral health.
- Focus on equitable access to health care as a human right so as to address the dramatic disparities within and between countries.
- Pay due attention to the link between non-communicable diseases and the social determinants of health, with a particular focus on the broader factors that influence behaviour and associated health risks.
- Strengthen health care systems through a comprehensive approach that places emphasis on primary health care and integrates prevention, specialised treatment and rehabilitation, supported by the enhancement of collaborative practice between healthcare professionals (integrated care).

“The disease burdens of both infectious and chronic diseases represent a significant challenge in particular to the development of low income countries,” said Eduardo Pisani, Director General of the International Federation of Pharmaceutical Manufacturers and Associations (IFPMA), who support the WHPA NCD campaign. “Concerted action on NCDs is needed, focusing on prevention, partnerships and access to health care. The good news is that the essential NCD medicines exist and are available at low cost. Besides, many NCDs can be prevented with lifestyle changes which will contribute substantially to alleviating the social and economic burden of NCDs. Prevention provides the best value for money but still depends on effective partnerships that can have an impact on the ground. The pharmaceutical industry's NCD Framework for Action and existing programmes funded by the industry demonstrate that we are committed solutions partners in helping fight the NCD challenge in the developing world.”

About WHPA www.whpa.org

The World Health Professionals Alliance WHPA is a unique alliance of The International Council of Nurses (ICN) www.icn.ch, the International Pharmaceutical Federation (FIP) www.fip.org, the World Confederation for Physical Therapy (WCPT) www.wcpt.org, the FDI World Dental Federation (FDI) www.fdiworldental.org and the World Medical Association (WMA) www.wma.net. WHPA addresses global health issues striving to help deliver cost effective, quality health care worldwide. Together, the partners of the WHPA include more than 600 national member organizations, making WHPA the key point of global access to health care professionals within the five disciplines.

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