TOGETHER MAKING A DIFFERENCE AGAINST NCDS

non-communicable diseases campaign
INTRODUCTION
The global epidemic of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) is of major concern to the World Health Professions Alliance WHPA, because it represents a significant threat to human health and social and economic development.¹

NCDs – cardiovascular disease, cancers, chronic respiratory diseases, diabetes, mental disorders and oral diseases² – account for more than 60% of global deaths, killing 36 million people in 2008. Nearly 80% of these deaths occur in low- and middle-income countries³. NCD deaths are also projected to increase by 15% globally between 2010 and 2020 (to 44 million deaths).⁴

Mental disorders affect and are affected by chronic conditions and NCDs. One in four patients visiting a health service has at least one mental disorder but most of these disorders are neither diagnosed nor treated. Untreated, mental disorders bring about unhealthy behaviour, non-compliance with prescribed medical regimens, diminished immune functioning, and poor prognosis.⁵
NC D PREVENTION - THE FIRST STEP
Health professionals and the national health systems in which they work have a significant role to play in raising public awareness about NCD risk factors. Health professionals can help people to reduce their risk of NCDs by providing them with support, education and encouragement.

Specifically they can help them:
• 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
• access preventive care and screening for preventable illness.

LINK BETWEEN SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH AND NCDS
Health behavior and beliefs are determined by the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work and age. Direct health care services seek to address premature ill-health. However, it is crucial to recognize the impact of cultural, environmental, economic and social inequalities on quality of life, good health and length of disability-free life expectancy.

Addressing the social determinants of health that are contributing to the increase in NCDs is beyond the health sector alone. Strategies to prevent chronic diseases demand the collaborative engagement of multiple sectors such as agriculture, finance, trade, transport, urban planning, education and recreation.

WORKING TOGETHER AGAINST NCDs

In preparation for the United Nations High Level Meeting on NCDs in September 2011, WHPA has launched an advocacy and awareness raising campaign supported by IFPMA. This partnership serves the needs of health professionals, patients, the public and governments. WHPA and IFPMA will address the importance of positive individual behavioural changes and support national interventions targeting social determinants of health.

The WHPA NCD Campaign toolkit includes a health literacy handbook for patients and the public, a NCD risk assessment tool and continuing educational materials to help health professionals to build their knowledge on NCDs, and communicate more effectively with patients about early prevention and positive behaviour changes. It highlights how a holistic health system, built on a primary health care model and including prevention, rehabilitation and specialised health services, is vital if the NCD epidemic is to be tackled.

For more information, please visit http://www.whpa.org and contact Dr. Julia Seyer at whpa@wma.net.

The World Health Professions Alliance WHPA brings together the global organizations representing the world’s dentists, nurses, pharmacists, physical therapists and physicians and speaks for more than 26 million health care professionals in more than 130 countries. WHPA works to improve global health and the quality of patient care.

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.