

Reducing the Burden from Non-Communicable Diseases: A Global Concern

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Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) include cardiovascular diseases, cancer, diabetes and chronic respiratory diseases. Tobacco use, an unhealthy diet, lack of physical inactivity, alcoholism, hypertension and obesity are commonly recognized risk factors for NCDs. NCDs are leading health problems in almost all countries and their magnitude is increasing. However, the poor and lower echelon of the population are disproportionately affected. In Africa and Asia NCDs have been implicated to be the cause for 35.6% of deaths. While under-nutrition kills in early life, it can also lead to increased risk of NCDs [1]. About, half of adult NCD deaths have been noted to be in the 15-64 year age group [2]. In 2012, WHO member states at the world health assembly passed a resolution targeted at reducing premature deaths from NCDs by 25% by 2050 [3]. Most premature deaths from NCDs can be prevented. Simple cost-effective and low-cost interventions can reduce risk factors for NCDs world-wide; these include treatment of nicotine dependence, promoting adequate breastfeeding, enforcing drunk-driving laws, and restrictions on

foods/drinks high in salt/fats/sugar (especially in the elderly), cutting down on junk foods and promoting healthy lifestyles. Strategies to prevent NCDs include reducing risk factors in all age groups and detection of high-risk individuals. Promoting a conducive environment enabling adaptation of a healthy lifestyle, (legislation, taxing, implementing financial incentives by governments, screening for hypertension, diabetes, etc.), early treatment to prevent complications, increasing public awareness and stressing the importance of nutrition and diet are among other simple measures by which we can reduce the burden of NCDs [4, 5].

References

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