

## Public health round-up

### First week risky for baby

Every year more than 900 000 newborn babies die in India, nearly 28% of the global estimate of 3.3 million neonatal deaths. Karamjeet, pictured here, gave birth to her baby boy in a health centre, on the advice of a health worker that this would increase his chances of survival – read their story on pages 708 and 709. A baby's first week is the time of greatest risk. Three quarters of newborn deaths are due to preterm delivery (29%), asphyxia (23%) and severe infections such as sepsis and pneumonia (25%), according to a study published in *PLoS Medicine* in August. The global 20-year study led by WHO and nongovernmental organization Save the Children found that fewer newborns are dying each year but more needs to be done to improve newborn survival as two thirds of these deaths are preventable.



WHO/Patralekha Chatterjee

### Donation for polio

Sanofi Pasteur has donated a vaccine seed-strain to WHO that is needed to make oral polio vaccine. The type 3 polio seed-strain is the original viral seed used to produce large quantities of vaccines against type 3 poliovirus. This donation now gives WHO ownership of all three seed-strain viruses (type 1, 2 and 3). This means the Organization can work directly with manufacturers to increase vaccine production for the global eradication effort. The strain will be stored at the National Institute for Biological Standards and Control in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

### Millions in limbo

Fifty years after the adoption of the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness, 12 million people remain without citizenship, meaning they are often denied basic rights and access to education, health care and employment. Only 38 of the 193 United Nations' Member States have signed this treaty. UNHCR, the United Nations' refugee agency, calls for more governments to commit to prevent statelessness and to protect displaced people.

### Access to medicines

Chinese citizens are paying 25% less than in 2008 for essential medicines, with the country's new national medicines system in place ahead of sched-

ule. According to the Chinese State Council Reform Office, public primary health care facilities are prohibited from applying a mark-up to drug prices and must provide essential medicines to patients at cost. All essential medicines are now on basic medical reimbursement lists and are reimbursed at significantly higher rates than non-essential drugs. Two insurance programmes have increased inpatient reimbursement to 60% or more. These announcements come from a review of China's progress towards providing universal access to health services by 2020.

**Men and women in low-income countries are around three times more likely to die of noncommunicable diseases before the age of 60 than people in high-income countries.**

### Responding to risk

Why do some countries cope better in crises than others? A new disaster risk index could help aid organiza-

tions shape their responses when disaster strikes. The World Risk Index, launched in September by the United Nations University Institute for Environment and Human Security in Bonn, considers 28 social, political, economic and ecological factors to determine how well a community is likely to respond to a crisis. According to the index, Afghanistan tops the list of the countries most vulnerable to disaster, while the Pacific islands of Vanuatu are ranked at highest risk of a natural hazard due to predicted rises in sea levels.

### Hazardous homes

Europeans spend about 90% of their time in built and artificial environments, some of which pose a serious health threat. According to *Environmental burden of disease associated with inadequate housing*, a report published by the WHO Regional Office for Europe, inadequate housing causes more than 100 000 deaths per year in the region, and contributes to many preventable diseases and injuries. The report found that many homes in the European Union had health hazards such as excessive noise (22%), dampness (16%), overcrowding (18%) and inadequate heating (9%). Report available at: [http://www.euro.who.int/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0003/142077/e95004.pdf](http://www.euro.who.int/__data/assets/pdf_file/0003/142077/e95004.pdf)

### New president for WMA

Brazilian doctor, Jose Luiz Gomes do Amaral, will take up the position of presi-

## Money for supplies

Essential medical supplies are running low and were predicted to run out in September in the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya. In response to the health crisis in the country following months of conflict, the United Nations Sanctions Committee approved the release of 138 million United States dollars (100 million Euros) from the Central Bank of Libyan Arab Jamahiriya. These funds will pay for medicines, vaccines and other medical supplies for the whole country for about 8 weeks.



WHO EMRO/Bahar Dewidar

dent of the World Medical Association at its Annual General Assembly this month in Uruguay. Currently president of the Brazilian Medical Association, Gomes do Amaral trained in anaesthetics and critical care. The World Medical Association represents more than 8 million physicians from 97 countries.

## Research scan

### Healthy habits add up

We know that improving certain lifestyle habits can delay or prevent diabetes but a study published in the September issue of the *Annals of Internal Medicine* shows that people can significantly reduce their risk by combining multiple healthy habits. The study of more than 200 000 American men and women aged 50–71 years showed that each additional healthy lifestyle habit reduced the chance of developing diabetes by at least 30%. The study measured participants' dietary habits, physical activity, body weight, smoking and alcohol consumption. It found that those with the most healthy habits were about 80% less likely to develop diabetes.

### Double the risk

Cigarette smoking causes twice as much damage to women's arteries than to those of men who smoke the same amount, according to research presented at the European Society of Cardiology Congress in Paris in August. The study used ultrasound technology to examine the carotid arteries of 3500 men and women from Finland, France, Italy, the Netherlands and Sweden. It found that the number of cigarettes a person smoked over their lifetime directly correlated to the extent of damage caused to their arteries. However, this damage is more than twice as bad in women than in men who smoked the same amount. Elena Tremoli, scientific director of the Monzino Cardiology Centre in Milan who led the study, says: "Women tend to think that they are less susceptible to the damages of cardiovascular risk factors. Our results indicate that, at least for smoking, this is not true." While in most European countries a significant proportion of men have quit smoking, in many countries (e.g. Finland and Italy) the percentage of women smokers remained roughly constant in the last three decades,

whereas in others (France, Spain) it has increased, according to WHO figures.

### Fifteen minutes for three years

People who exercise for 90 minutes a week (or just 15 minutes a day) could add three years to their life expectancy than if they did no exercise at all. Although WHO recommends that people exercise for 150 minutes a week, any exercise is better than none, according to a study published online in August in *The Lancet*. Every additional 15 minutes of moderate intensity exercise per day reduced the risk of death by 4%. Access the study at: [http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(11\)60749-6/abstract](http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(11)60749-6/abstract) ■

## Looking ahead

**1 October: International Day of Older Persons** <http://www.un.org/en/events/olderpersonsday>

**4 October: World Habitat Day** <http://www.unhabitat.org/categories.asp?catid=669>

**10 October: World Mental Health Day** <http://www.wfmh.org/00WorldMentalHealthDay.htm>

**14 October: World Sight Day** <http://www.vision2020.org>

**15 October: Global Handwashing Day** <http://www.globalhandwashingday.org>

**16 October: World Food Day** <http://www.fao.org/getinvolved/worldfoodday>

**17 October: International Day for the Eradication of Poverty** <http://www.oct17.org>

**20 October: World Statistics Day** <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/wsd>

**19–21 October: World Conference on Social Determinants of Health. Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.**

**14 November: World Diabetes Day**

**20 November: Universal Children's Day**

**20 November: World Day of Remembrance for Road Traffic Victims**

**25 November: International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women**

**1 December: World AIDS Day**

**3 December: International Day of People with Disabilities** <http://www.idpwd.com.au>

**10 December: International Human Rights Day** <http://www.ohchr.org>

**18 December: International Migrants Day**

**20 December: International Human Solidarity Day**