

Public health round-up

Raising community awareness



PAHO/WHO

A Haitian boy looks at a poster on preventing cholera. Thousands of Haitians like him are the target of cholera awareness campaigns in schools, public places and markets, using posters in the local Creole language designed by Haitian graphic artists. Also, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies has been sending 300 000 text messages each day on topics such as disinfection practices. The World Health Organization and its Regional Office for the Americas have been supporting the Ministry of Health by helping to set up treatment centres and distribute medical supplies.

About 172 000 cases have been reported in Haiti since cholera broke out in October last year. More than half of these cases have required hospitalization and 3650 people have died so far in the epidemic.

Tracking promises and spending

The new United Nations Commission on Information and Accountability for Women's and Children's Health met for the first time on 26 January. The Commission is developing ways to help countries monitor where health resources are spent and which programmes are the most effective. The Commission will be co-chaired by Jakaya Kikwete, President of the United Republic of Tanzania, and Stephen Harper, Prime Minister of Canada. Commissioners have been appointed from academia, civil society and the private sector in both developing and developed countries. Working groups chaired by Richard Horton, editor of the *Lancet*, and Anne Mills, professor at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, have been preparing background papers for the January meeting. The Commission's final report is due to be submitted to the United Nations General Assembly in New York in September 2011.

Atlas on substance abuse

Alcohol contributes to around 35 deaths per 100 000 population while illicit drugs cause 4 deaths per 100 000 every year, according to WHO's first global report on substance use disorders. *The atlas on substance abuse: resources for the prevention and treatment of substance use disorders* has collected information from 147 countries, representing 88% of the world's population. It has a particular focus on low- and middle-income countries. For the first time, the report provides a global overview of the resources available for the treatment and prevention of substance use disorders. The report is available from: http://www.who.int/substance_abuse/publications/treatment/en/index.html

Nurses and climate change

Up to 500 nurses are being recruited in Nigeria for a study that aims to measure the impact of climate change on health. "The nurses will make a note of malaria cases in any area where it usually isn't

found, and all this information will be fed into a climate model which will help prepare health-related climate change projections for the country," says Dr Lynn Wilson, executive director of the SeaTrust Institute, a scientific and educational non-profit organization. The study, with the working title of *Capacity building for nurses on climate change and human health*, is a joint collaboration between the SeaTrust Institute, a Nigerian non-governmental organization and Nurses Across Borders.

Technology for traditions

WHO launches an interactive web-based platform this month to allow experts to document terms and concepts used in traditional medicine. This is the second stage of the recently announced International Classification of Traditional Medicine (ICTM) project, which aims to use these definitions to develop an evidence base for the objective study of traditional medicine. Since December

End the violence



Courtesy of Jerry Rivera

WHO is calling for more research into the prevention of violence against women in its recently published title *Preventing intimate partner and sexual violence against women: taking action and generating evidence*. The *Bulletin* is accepting submission of papers on this subject throughout 2011 at: <http://submit.bwho.org>. Jerry Rivera, a Grammy-nominated Latin American singer, is a spokesperson for the WHO Regional Office for the Americas's campaign to raise awareness of, and reduce, violence against women especially in Latin America and among Hispanic people in the United States of America. His song *Rios de dolor* (Rivers of Pain) calls for an end to domestic violence. See his message online at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0U4qqhQSRJs&feature=youtube_gdata_player

2010, more than 700 codes have been established for terminologies and classifications for diagnoses. Initially, the project will focus on the national classification systems of China, Japan and the Republic of Korea but will expand to other areas of traditional medicine. The ICTM will be included in WHO's International Classification of Diseases, used by all Member States, and is expected to be published in March 2014.

Tobacco tax tips

Taxation of tobacco is recognized as one of the most effective tobacco control measures, particularly among people on lower incomes. A 10% price increase has been found to reduce demand for tobacco by 4% to 8% in low- and middle-income countries and by 4% in high-income countries, at the same time raising funds for the government to tackle some of the health problems caused by tobacco consumption. WHO's *Technical manual on tobacco*

tax administration will help governments to improve health and increase revenues by identifying a set of "best practices" for tobacco taxation. This first-of-a-kind guide to tobacco taxation explains the different types of taxes, obstacles that governments may face, potential problems of administration and global best practices. The manual is available from: http://www.who.int/tobacco/publications/tax_administration/en/index.html

Vaccine workshop

Recent outbreaks of yellow fever in Uganda and cholera in Haiti have highlighted the need for sustainable vaccine production in developing countries for use in those countries. To address the problems of influenza vaccine production in developing countries, WHO is planning a joint workshop in Brazil with the United States Department of Health and Human Services in April. More details available from: <http://www.globalhealth.gov/topics/vaccine-Workshops/index.html>

“Health workers – paid and volunteers alike – perform miracles every day and often do so with very limited resources under trying conditions.”

Dr Mirta Roses, WHO Regional Director for the Americas, on the anniversary of the Haiti earthquake.

Cartoon contest with heart

The Cardiovascular Research Center in Barcelona has announced an international cartoon competition that aims to highlight the importance of cardiovascular research to the general population. The cartoons should contain concepts and images that show the impact of cardiovascular disease on society, the importance of prevention and the need for further research. The deadline for entries is 15 March 2011. The entry form and more details are available from: <http://www.csic-iccc.org/> ■

Looking ahead

4 February: World Cancer Day. Around the world, the Union for International Cancer Control and partner organizations will hold events to raise awareness about cancer prevention and detection. For example, in Bujumbura, Burundi, children will take part in an anti-smoking campaign that includes free T-shirts, a football match and a film about the effects of smoking. In the Republic of Moldova, the Reproductive Health Training Centre in Chisinau will highlight cervical cancer prevention, while in the Russian Federation the focus will be on kidney cancer, with a street march planned in Moscow. More information available from: www.worldcancerday.org

8 March: 100 years of International Women's Day. This day celebrates the economic, political and social achievements of women and is an opportunity to call for gender equality and women's empowerment.

22 March: World Water Day. The theme for 2011 is Water for cities: responding to the urban challenge. Events around the world include an international photography contest, a 100km run from Vancouver to Abbotsford, Canada, to raise money for water projects in Ethiopia, and a conference in Ghana on the topic of rural access to clean water. More information available from: <http://www.worldwaterday.org>

24 March: World Tuberculosis Day. This disease still kills about two million people every year, mostly in developing countries. More information available from: http://www.stoptb.org/events/world_tb_day

4 April: United Nations Mine Awareness Day. This day aims to raise awareness about the dangers of landmines and progress towards their eradication.

7 April: World Health Day – Combating drug resistance. WHO will launch a worldwide campaign on antimicrobial resistance, calling on governments and stakeholders to implement the policies and practices needed to prevent drug resistance and safeguard medicines for future generations. More information available from: <http://www.who.int/world-health-day/en/index.html>

25 April: World Malaria Day. Around half of the world's population is at risk of malaria, particularly those living in low-income countries. It infects more than 500 million people per year and kills about 1 million. This day is an opportunity to showcase scientific advances and other efforts to control malaria. More information available from: <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/events/annual/malaria/en/index.html>

28–29 April 2011: Russian Ministerial Conference on noncommunicable diseases and healthy lifestyles in Moscow.