

Public health round-up

The importance of inclusion



CBM/argum/Einberger

“It is my hope that this century will mark a turning point for inclusion of people with disabilities in the lives of their societies.”

Stephen Hawking

Children with disabilities, such as this Tanzanian boy with spina bifida, should be included in mainstream schools where possible. This is one of the recommendations made in the first World report on disability, to be published on 9 June by WHO and the World Bank. The report provides the first comprehensive global snapshot of disability and its impact on individuals and society. The report will be available in accessible PDF and DAISY formats for people with visual impairments and in an EasyRead version for people with intellectual disabilities. A summary will be available in accessible formats in all six United Nations languages and in Braille in English, French and Spanish.

Access to early research

Early scientific information presented in conference posters is an important resource but often it is lost once a conference is over. These posters disappear, unless the research is published later as a paper. Faculty of 1000, a British publisher, aims to change this with its new open-access repository which provides a permanent venue for dissemination and discussion of early research in the form of conference posters. More than 85% of life-science and medical researchers said they would submit their work to such a repository. Many scientific publishers have confirmed that they will not regard this as prior publication. <http://posters.f1000.com>

Leading killers increasing

Noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) are the leading killer today and are on the increase, according to the first WHO *Global status report on noncommunicable diseases* launched in Moscow on 27 April 2011. Conditions such as heart disease, stroke, chronic lung disease, cancer and diabetes cause more than 60% of global deaths, 80% of these in low- and middle-income

countries, dispelling the myth that such conditions are mainly a problem of affluent societies. “About 30% of people dying from NCDs in low- and middle-income countries are aged less than 60 years and are in their most productive period of life. These premature deaths are all the more tragic because they are largely preventable,” says Ala Alwan, WHO Assistant Director-General for Noncommunicable Diseases and Mental Health. The report reviews the current status of NCDs and provides guidance for countries to address the problem. http://www.who.int/chp/ncd_global_status_report

Paradigm shift needed

Participants at the first Global Ministerial Conference on healthy lifestyles and non-communicable disease control in Moscow declared their commitment to fighting NCDs. The Moscow Declaration recognizes the need for a “paradigm shift” in dealing with NCD challenges, including stronger action across different sectors to tackle the environmental, economic and social factors that contribute to these diseases. http://www.who.int/nmh/events/moscow_ncds_2011/conference_documents/moscow_declaration_en.pdf

Common but neglected

While almost half of the world’s adults at any one time have recent personal experience of headache, there is little knowledge of how headache affects many of the populations of the world. Launched on 3 May, the *Atlas of headache disorders and resources in the world 2011* is the first global study on the burden of headache and the resources available to reduce it, with data from 101 countries representing 86% of the world’s population. Published by WHO in collaboration with Lifting the Burden, a nongovernmental organization, the report draws attention to the inadequacies of responses to this common health problem throughout the world. http://www.who.int/mental_health/management/who_atlas_headache_disorders.pdf

New essential medicines

In March, 16 new medicines were added to WHO’s Model List of Essential Medicines (EML). These new additions included artesunate + amodiaquine combination tablets to treat malaria in adults and children and 200- μ g misoprostol tablets to prevent postpartum haemorrhage, in situations where oxytocin is not available or cannot be safely used. The 2011 list also includes tranexamic acid injection for the treatment of adult patients with trauma and significant risk of ongoing haemorrhage. Hans Hogerzeil, director of the WHO Department of Essential Medicines and Pharmaceutical Policies, explained the significance of the Expert Committee recommendations: “Many countries use the Model EML to guide the development of their national essential medicines lists and to guide the procurement or reimbursement of the most cost-effective medicines – in other words to get the best value for money. This new list contains important updates relevant for all countries working towards the Millennium Development Goals.” www.who.int/www.who.int/selection_medicines

Call to end sex selection

The natural sex ratio at birth ranges from 102 to 106 males per 100 females. However, gender-biased sex selection through such practices as selective abortion and

Paint the world red



WHO/Bank of Blood and Tissues, Catalonia

Worldwide each year there are approximately 93 million blood donations, 50% of which are collected in high-income countries, home to only 16% of the world's population.

If just 1% of a country's population donated blood, it would be sufficient to meet its basic requirements for blood transfusion. But donation rates are still less than 1% in 77 countries, all of which are low- and middle-income countries. On 14 June, World Blood Donor Day will underscore the urgent need for more blood donors with its theme "More blood. More life." WHO and partners are encouraging communities everywhere to "paint the world red", whether by symbolically colouring, covering or lighting monuments, popular landmarks and buildings in red; staging cultural events with a red-coloured theme; or forming a "human blood drop" in prominent public places. <http://wbdd.org>

infanticide has resulted in birth ratios as high as 130 males per 100 females in some countries. At the Human Rights Council meeting this month, WHO and other United Nations agencies are due to call for an end to this form of gender discrimination. Their call, contained in *Preventing gender-biased sex selection: an interagency statement OHCHR, UNFPA, UNICEF, UN Women and WHO*, highlights the public health and human rights aspects of the problem and provides recommendations on how best to take effective action. http://www.who.int/reproductivehealth/publications/gender_rights/9789241501460

Clean hands save lives

Health care-associated infections are the most frequent adverse health-care event, affecting hundreds of millions of patients around the world. Many of these potentially life-threatening infections are preventable through good hand hygiene of health-care workers. On 5 May, WHO's Patient Safety Programme launched its global campaign "Save Lives: Clean Your Hands". The focus this year was "Where do YOU stand on hand hygiene?" and called for health workers to track their progress in improving hand hygiene and reducing infection. WHO also launched its report on the *Global burden of health-care associated infection* as well as the new

Hand hygiene self-assessment framework to help hospitals and health-care facilities assess their progress and plan improvements. <http://www.who.int/gpsc>

More phones than toilets

More Africans have access to a mobile phone than to a clean toilet, according to *Mobile Africa report 2011*. The report forecasts that 68% of the African population will own a mobile phone in the next five years, while WHO estimates show that less than 50% of Africans have access to toilet facilities. More than 500 million Africans own a mobile phone, an increase from 246 million in 2008. The four biggest mobile phone markets in Africa are Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa.

Saving children with malaria

WHO now recommends parenteral artesunate as the treatment of choice for managing severe falciparum malaria in African children. Recent clinical trials have proven that treatment of severe malaria with artesunate significantly reduces the risk of death in adults as well as in children compared with parenteral quinine. Artesunate is easier to administer and is associated with fewer side-effects than quinine, the current treatment for severe malaria in most countries. WHO has also prequalified the first injectable artesunate

formulation, manufactured by Guilin Pharmaceutical Company, Guangxi, China. This means that the medicine can now be procured with international funding, which will progressively increase access. ■

Looking ahead

5 June: World Environment Day <http://www.unep.org/wed>

14 June: World Blood Donor Day <http://wbdd.org>

16 June: Informal interactive hearing on noncommunicable diseases, United Nations Headquarters, New York, USA. http://www.who.int/nmh/events/2011/informal_hearing

26 June: International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking <http://www.unodc.org/drugs/june-26>

11 July: World Population Day <http://www.un.org/en/events/populationday>

28 July: World Hepatitis Day <http://www.worldhepatitisalliance.org/WorldHepatitisDay.aspx>

1–7 August: World Breastfeeding Week <http://worldbreastfeedingweek.org>

9 August: International Day of the World's Indigenous People <http://www.un.org/en/events/indigenousday>

19 August: World Humanitarian Day <http://ochaonline.un.org/whd>