

World Congress of Cardiology puts special focus on developing countries

The 2010 World Congress of Cardiology (WCC), scheduled to take place in Beijing, China, will put a special emphasis on cardiology issues that affect people living in the low- and middle-income countries in the Asia-Pacific region.

"It is truly an international meeting," said Dr. Dong Zhao, who is the co-chair of the 2010 WCC scientific program committee. "The WCC is for the whole world in that it does not only look at cardiovascular trends and issues that are relevant to the developed nations, it also places a strong emphasis on issues that are pertinent to developing countries."

The congress is being jointly organized by the World Heart Federation (WHF), the Chinese Society of Cardiology and the Chinese Medical Association.

CVD burden in the Asia Pacific region

It is apt that China is playing host to the WCC considering that cardiovascular disease has become a rapidly increasing problem in the Asia-Pacific region.

According to Zhao, 50 percent of the global burden of cardiovascular disease (CVD) comes from the Asia-Pacific region. She also said that there are several patterns of CVD

by 2015 China would have lost some US\$558 billion in national income as a consequence of rising heart disease, stroke and diabetes.

Economic transition increases CVD burden

Zhao calls the increasing burden of CVD in the Asia Pacific region "a characteristic of economic transition."

She explained that as a country's economy expands, the living environment changes and people adapt their lifestyles to suit that environment. With economic transition comes the availability of richer and more consistent food supplies, better medical care and better infrastructure to provide access to medical treatment and the availability of screening to identify disease prevalence.

Although life expectancy increases with better medical care, the habits associated with economic prosperity may contribute to CVD risk factors such as obesity and lack of physical activity.

The impact of economic transition on CVD prevalence makes it all the more important for the doctors' role in CVD management to be reviewed, consistently updated and adapted to the healthcare situation in a country.

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that have been observed within the region.

In China and South Korea, for instance, CHD mortality rates are relatively low but stroke mortality rates are high. Both CHD and stroke mortality rates are low in Japan and Hong Kong while, in Singapore, CHD mortality is high and stroke mortality is low. Zhao added that in some parts of China there is a greater prevalence of ischemic stroke and a decrease in hemorrhagic stroke.

CVD prevalence also places a heavy burden on the economies of developing countries. For example, the WHO estimates that

CVD management in resource-poor areas

Beyond providing cardiologists from all over the world a chance to share in the latest scientific knowledge and updates on medical treatment and treatment technologies, the WCC will look at the practical application of treatment guidelines and modalities in countries which have limited resources.

"For the WCC, it is not just the sharing of new knowledge that is important. The WCC also emphasizes the practical implementation of guidelines and more cost-effective



The WCC aims to address issues affecting doctors and patients in the Asia Pacific region.

prevention strategies that can be used in low- and middle-income countries that are not able to afford all the technology that the guidelines talk about," Zhao stated.

She elaborated that guidelines for CVD management were often geared toward application of a new drug or technology to treat disease. Countries such as China, which are still in the low- and middle-income group do not have the resources or infrastructure capabilities to apply those guidelines.

"Doctors from countries with limited resources will learn, from a very practical point of view, how to use the guidelines or even how to develop a guideline in a country that has limited resources," said Zhao.

Doctors from less developed countries who attend the WCC in China can also capitalize on the opportunity to glean the knowledge of experts who have had similar experiences treating patients in poorer nations, said Zhao. "China is also a developing country and they can engage with experts here who may be in similar situations."

A chance to pick the brains of experts the world over

Over 250 sessions will be presented at the meeting with topics ranging from dyslipidemia and metabolic disorders to congenital heart disease. There will also be key presentations of the latest trial results.

"The WHF has a long list of experts from different parts of the world who are knowledgeable in various aspects of cardiology. We have sent letters to these experts requesting them to choose topics that they

think would best suit scientific sessions," said Zhao.

"Although I don't think one conference can change clinical practice, it is a big gathering of cardiology experts and it may be possible for doctors to develop cross-border partnerships that would be beneficial for healthcare in their home countries."

The dissemination of cutting-edge information and the summary of developments in each field will not only build the physicians' competence in treating patients, it will also help them to be better patient educators.

The main role of doctors used to be in diagnosing and treating patients but now, owing to the fact that most epidemic diseases are closely related to lifestyle, doctors are being called upon to educate their patients about healthy living, noted Zhao.

"It is not enough for the doctor to see patients and just give a drug. The main challenge for the doctor is whether he/she can use some of their consultation time to educate patients about lifestyle modification," said Zhao.

Conclusion

This is the first time China is hosting the WCC and it is in keeping with the WHF's mission of "helping people achieve a longer and better life through prevention and control of heart disease and stroke, with a focus on low- and middle-income countries," said Zhao, noting that the WCC welcomes cardiologists from all over the world to come and share in the presentations made by some of the field's most illustrious experts. **MI**

2010 World Congress of Cardiology



The 2010 World Cardiology Congress is being held in Beijing, China, from the 16th to the 19th June at the China National Convention Center located next to the Bird's Nest Stadium (seen above). For more details of the scientific program and information on how to register and submit an abstract to the congress, please visit www.worldcardiocongress.org.