

Governments ignore the world's leading cause of death

News release

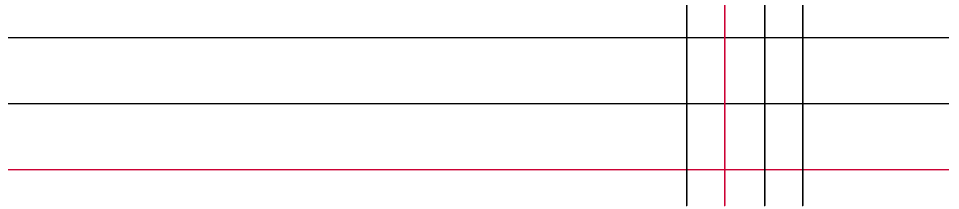
(Story embargoed until 12pm CET, Sunday 4th September)

4th September 2005, Stockholm, Sweden - Cardiovascular disease is the world's leading cause of death and a major cost burden for healthcare administrators. 17 million people die from cardiovascular disease (CVD) each year, with 80 per cent of all deaths occurring in low and middle income countries. While simple and cost-effective preventative measures can reduce CVD death and disability by 50 per cent, CVD is being excluded from the global health agenda. At the European Society of Cardiology (ESC) Congress 2005, the World Heart Federation, an NGO dedicated to the global prevention of heart disease and stroke, will call for an expansion of the global health agenda, particularly the Millennium Development Goals, a week before the 2005 World Summit where Heads of State and Government will meet at the United Nations, in New York, for the first comprehensive review of the goals set in 2000.

"Many developing countries are now affected by a double burden of disease; the combination of infectious diseases, with a rapidly growing new epidemic of chronic, noncommunicable diseases, such as heart disease, stroke, diabetes, chronic lung disease and some cancers. While it is important to remain focused on HIV/AIDS, Malaria and TB, it is imperative to begin to reduce the burden of cardiovascular disease, the leading chronic disease," said Dr Valentin Fuster, President, World Heart Federation.

"Governments simply cannot afford to wait any longer. The lack of global recognition will limit investment into research, programmes and policies to help prevent cardiovascular disease from overwhelming already overstretched health budgets, negatively impacting developing economies and resulting in millions of unnecessary premature deaths. Governments need to acknowledge the global threat of cardiovascular disease, to extend the health objectives of the Millennium Development Goals by including chronic disease such as cardiovascular disease and to take action now."

.../



GOVERNMENTS IGNORE THE WORLD'S LEADING CAUSE OF DEATH/2

“The prevention and control of cardiovascular disease is hindered partly due to misconceptions surrounding the disease. Still today, beliefs remain that cardiovascular disease only affects the old, the affluent and white males, but in reality cardiovascular disease is killing people from all classes, races and nationalities, and particularly in developing countries at young and productive ages,” said Dr Sidney Smith, Chairman Scientific Advisory Board, World Heart Federation. “Cardiovascular disease knows no boundaries. It is taking the lives of millions each year and the tragedy is that cardiovascular disease can be largely prevented.”

Global health has arguably been moved to centre stage by the United Nations through the definition of the Millennium Development Goals, yet cardiovascular disease is not actively included. The World Heart Federation is therefore calling for the Heads of State and Government to take the burden of cardiovascular disease into consideration when re-evaluating the Millennium Development Goals.

- Ends -

About the World Heart Federation

The World Heart Federation, a non governmental organization based in Geneva, Switzerland, is committed to helping the global population achieve a longer and better life through prevention and control of heart disease and stroke, with a particular focus on low and middle-income countries. It is comprised of 186 member societies of cardiology and heart foundations from 100 countries covering the regions of Asia-Pacific, Europe, the Americas and Africa.

Press contact:
Lauren O'Brien
Cohn & Wolfe Public Relations
Tel: +41 22 908 4074
E-mail: lauren_o'brien@ch.cohnwolfe.com

