***Under embargo until 27 September 2019***

**On World Heart Day, 29 September 2019, the World Heart Federation (WHF) calls for heart health equity … because every heartbeat matters**

* *This year, WHF is inspiring millions of people around the world to be Heart Heroes … by making, and keeping, a promise to look after their, their relatives’ and their friends’ hearts*
* *Cardiovascular disease is the world’s biggest cause of death, killing 17.9 million people a year: in comparison, HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis combined kill three million (WHO)*
* *Taking up exercise in middle-age or later is linked to a 29% lower risk of dying from CVD (BMJ)*
* *Air pollution is contributing to up to 25% of cardiovascular deaths (WHO)*
* *Smoking just one cigarette per day is linked to a 48% raised risk of coronary heart disease (BMJ)*

**Not all hearts are equal … but they should be**

WHF, our Members and Partners believe in a world where heart health for everyone is a fundamental human right and a crucial element of health justice. Regardless of country, region, origin, race, gender, age, education and incomes, each human being is entitled to cardiovascular health and wellbeing through health promotion, access to prevention, control and management of cardiovascular disease (CVD). Sadly this is not the case today.

World Heart Day is the biggest awareness-raising platform for CVD and this year we are using it to shine a spotlight on heart health inequities. One of the most pressing issues remains access to essential cardiovascular medicines: two billion people, around one-third of the global population, lack access to the medicines they need, mostly affecting those in underserved countries, regions or isolated areas within cities.[[1]](#footnote-1) Despite being the number one cause of death and disability, providing access to CVD medicines is not high on the global agenda.

In all global income settings there is also increasing evidence that higher rates of cardiovascular events and barriers to accessing healthcare are linked to socioeconomic determinants of health, including education and health awareness.[[2]](#footnote-2)

But other things can also contribute to heart health inequity:

* Air pollution is responsible for 25% of cardiovascular deaths (WHO) putting those living in cities at greater risk
* A healthy diet is essential to lower CVD risk, yet in many schools, offices, hospitals and homes people are still offered energy-dense foods and are faced with limited healthy choices
* In countries where smoking bans are not in place, people often have no choice but to work and socialize in places where secondhand smoke increases their CVD risk
* Lack of safe, outdoor spaces or cycle paths can also limit individual’s ability to be more active, increasing CVD risk
* Genetic background and specific geographies may also predispose certain populations to increased risk of CVD

**Professor Karen Sliwa, WHF President, comments**:

“Within my home country of South Africa, as in so many areas of the world, certain population groups are affluent with access to excellent education and health care, while the majority remain poorly educated, residing in absolute or relative poverty. No matter where in the world they occur, socioeconomic determinants of health and poverty have profound effects on CVD patterns and its prevention, worsened by late diagnosis and limited access to various forms of diseases management.

“Along with targeted advocacy, World Heart Day, with its global reach and diversity, plays an important part in WHF’s strategy to raise awareness of these issues and spread the message of heart-healthy lifestyles in all populations. Yet again this year I will be helping to organize and support events in my home of Cape Town. I believe that raising awareness in this way is part of my personal and professional duty, because much can still be done to achieve heart health in South Africa and beyond.”

**My Heart, Your Heart**

Created and led by the World Heart Federation (WHF), World Heart Day aims to combat the rising number of people with cardiovascular disease (CVD) and champion heart health equity. The 2019 campaign, in partnership with Boehringer Ingelheim, Manulife and Pfizer, is about creating a global network of Heart Heroes, all inspiring each other to look after our hearts by making and keeping a promise:

* A promise to our families to cook and eat more healthily, exercise more and stop using tobacco
* A promise to our children to help them to be more active and to say no to smoking
* A promise as healthcare professionals to help patients to control their CVD risk factors
* A promise as policymakers to implement an NCD action plan
* A promise for MY HEART, YOUR HEART

On 29 September, people all around the world will unite to fight CVD by making and sharing their own campaign posters online, holding awareness activities and events, spreading the word on social media, sharing the campaign videos, organizing fundraising activities for their local heart foundation and illuminating iconic landmarks, buildings or monuments.

To make your promise to support heart health this World Heart Day, visit [http://www.worldheart.org](https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=https-3A__emea01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com_-3Furl-3Dhttp-253A-252F-252Fwww.worldheart.org-26data-3D02-257C01-257C-257C78d1ea5af467463369da08d614a8b9eb-257C1a407a2d76754d178692b3ac285306e4-257C0-257C0-257C636719113328586713-26sdata-3DfJKNS9JfLulkoCn1XgoDmbM2MaSIHdph2eR7xYSLvQI-253D-26reserved-3D0&d=DwMGaQ&c=9wxE0DgWbPxd1HCzjwN8Eaww1--ViDajIU4RXCxgSXE&r=JOr9fCyNgg0OzfTzkOSO8foYXk4-WvBSWfxLKeIX5JI&m=3IouSwFVe4j0m3BUGfzAZpSHrRd5T5cfcATaXJt801M&s=mYqjbMDgf27QXSE8NAS-BaODt6gv5xxbnyxdKmukhp8&e=) and create and share your own poster and promise on social media using #WorldHeartDay and tagging [www.facebook.com/worldheartfederation](https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=https-3A__emea01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com_-3Furl-3Dhttp-253A-252F-252Fwww.facebook.com-252Fworldheartfederation-26data-3D02-257C01-257C-257C78d1ea5af467463369da08d614a8b9eb-257C1a407a2d76754d178692b3ac285306e4-257C0-257C0-257C636719113328596721-26sdata-3DRKSzJRxPpEZ0v31ItawE-252BqerQA6y8qeqbm8NKz7AuLI-253D-26reserved-3D0&d=DwMGaQ&c=9wxE0DgWbPxd1HCzjwN8Eaww1--ViDajIU4RXCxgSXE&r=JOr9fCyNgg0OzfTzkOSO8foYXk4-WvBSWfxLKeIX5JI&m=3IouSwFVe4j0m3BUGfzAZpSHrRd5T5cfcATaXJt801M&s=DHl7nhL_BXEYh4QKEt5kaxN94HvFyn60M38A5J8qywk&e=).

**Paul Levesque, Global President, Pfizer Rare Disease:** “We are proud to partner with the World Heart Federation for World Heart Day to help raise awareness of rare causes of heart disease, such as transthyretin amyloid cardiomyopathy (known as ATTR-CM), a rare, underdiagnosed and fatal condition resulting in progressive heart failure. We support the WHF in their mission and believe that everyone, including those affected by rare conditions, has the fundamental right to heart health.”

**Stacey Grant-Thompson, Chief Marketing Officer, Manulife Canada**: “Manulife has been a strong supporter of heart-related health initiatives for more than three decades. We’re looking forward to continuing to walk the talk on heart health – literally – when our employees around the world lace up for the fourth annual Global Walk on September 27 for World Heart Day. Given one in 12 adults will live with heart disease at some point, this a problem that affects everyone in some way. Manulife is committed to helping people make healthier choices and lead healthier lives by showing them the little steps they take today can go a long way.”

**Waheed Jamal, Corporate Vice President and Head of Cardiometabolic Medicine, Boehringer Ingelheim:** “This World Heart Day, we are proud to be part of the network, harnessed by the World Heart Federation, encouraging people from around the world to join forces and raise awareness of the burden of cardiovascular disease. At Boehringer Ingelheim we are committed to improving the lives of people living with cardiovascular disease and its associated conditions. We acknowledge the need for action in order to address this significant unmet need through lifestyle changes and medical intervention and we welcome all advances in the understanding of cardiometabolic diseases that may benefit people living with these conditions.

**Ends**

**For any further information, including stats and facts or to arrange an interview or briefing please contact the WHF press office on cla@homeatc.com**

The World Heart Day video can be viewed [here](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HVLF_RyE4iA&feature=youtu.be)

**The iconic venues turning red for World Heart Day include:**

* Cape Wheel, South Africa
* Niagara Falls, USA
* CN Tower, Canada
* Jet d’Eau, Switzerland
* Sky Tower, New Zealand
* Telstra Tower, Australia
* Ljubljana Castle, Slovenia
* Emirates Spinnaker Tower, UK
* Torre de Belém, Portugal

**Notes to editors**

**About World Heart Day**

World Heart Day was founded in 2000 to inform people around the globe that heart disease and stroke are the world’s leading causes of death, claiming more than 17.5 million lives each year. World Heart Day takes place on 29 September every year. For more information about World Heart Day including access to the campaign resources [visit the website](https://www.world-heart-federation.org/world-heart-day/).

**About the World Heart Federation**

The World Heart Federation is dedicated to leading the global fight against cardiovascular disease (CVD), including heart disease and stroke. We are the only global advocacy and leadership organization bringing together the entire CVD community to drive the CVD agenda and help people live longer, better, more heart-healthy lives. We and our members - more than 200 organizations, scientific societies, foundations and patient associations in over 100 countries - believe in a world where heart health for everyone is a fundamental human right and a crucial element of global health justice. Because every heartbeat matters.

For more information, please visit: www.worldheart.org; www.facebook.com/worldheartfederation and twitter.com/worldheartfed.

1. Veronika Wirtz et al, “Essential Medicine for Universal Health Coverage,” The Lancet Commissions, The Lancet, (2017):422 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Mayagah Kanj and Wayne Mitic, “Health Literacy,” paper presented as a working document for discussion at the 7th Global Conference on Health Promotion, “Promoting Health and Development: Closing the Implementation Gap,” Nairobi, Kenya, October 2019, 20. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)