



## **PERFECT STORM FOR THE HEART CREATED BY COVID-19**

**Geneva, 29 September 2020 – The COVID-19 pandemic is creating a perfect storm for heart health, the World Heart Federation (WHF) warns on World Heart Day. Three main factors are contributing to this phenomenon. First, people with COVID-19 and heart disease are among those with the highest risk of death and of developing severe conditions. Second, after the virus attacks, the heart might be adversely affected even in people without previous heart conditions, potentially resulting in long-term damage. Finally, fear of the virus has already led to a sharp decline in hospital visits by heart patients for routine and emergency care.**

This World Heart Day is unlike any other that has come before. Public health is front and centre as societies face the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic and the physical, emotional and economic toll it has taken. Almost a million lives have been lost to COVID-19 this year. As a comparison, an estimated 17.8 million people died from cardiovascular disease in 2017. While patients steer clear of hospitals out of fear of catching the virus, their health is compromised even further.

WHF has the singular purpose of uniting the global health community to beat cardiovascular disease. This year, we are asking individuals, communities and governments to “use heart” to make better choices for society, our loved ones and ourselves. The “Use Heart” call to action is about using our head, influence and compassion to beat cardiovascular disease, the world’s number one killer. Given the current situation, WHF is also calling for recognition and urgent protection of frontline healthcare providers.

Professor Karen Sliwa, WHF President, said: “In these trying times, it is paramount that we pay special attention to those who are at greater risk of complications from COVID-19 as well as better understand how the virus is affecting the hearts of otherwise healthy people. COVID-19 has created a perfect storm, in which those people with cardiovascular disease fare poorly, and those at risk don’t seek the treatment that they need to keep their hearts healthy. The heart and the entire vascular system are in danger and we need to act now. The world has not experienced a global event on this scale in decades – today we have a unique opportunity to unite, to mobilise our skills and to use our heart to act.”

Cardiovascular disease has many causes: from smoking to diabetes, high blood pressure, obesity, and air pollution. To combat these, WHF is calling not only for individual behaviour change but for a societal one. With equity at the centre of WHF’s work, it is vital to make access to healthcare, healthy foods and a healthy way of life accessible and affordable to all people. Regulating unhealthy products, while creating healthy environments are examples of such solutions for governments and communities.

### **WHF Global Study on Cardiovascular Disease and COVID-19**

In order to better understand the relationship between cardiovascular disease and COVID-19, WHF has embarked on a global study which aims to better describe cardiovascular outcomes and identify cardiovascular risk factors associated with severe complications and death in hospitalized patients with COVID-19. This study is already underway in Argentina, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Ghana, India, Iran, Japan, Kenya, Nigeria, Pakistan, Portugal, South Africa and Sudan. It is expected to publish preliminary data in late 2020, with a complete analysis in 2021. Hospitals around the world are currently preparing to start patient recruitment for the study and many additional countries will join the study in the coming months.

**EMBARGOED UNTIL TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 29, 2020  
AT 12:01AM NEW ZEALAND DAYLIGHT TIME (NZDT)**

### **“World’s Most Urgent Heart-to-Heart” – Panel Series on Behavioural and Societal Change**

On World Heart Day, WHF will also launch the “World’s Most Urgent Heart-to-Heart”, a series of debates focused on how to unlock behavioural and societal change to beat cardiovascular disease. For many people, preventing cardiovascular disease comes down to behaviour change. Yet, there is nothing harder than changing personal and societal behaviour, thereby realizing lasting change. Comprised of experts from a number of disciplines, the debates will seek to uncover insights into the triggers and barriers to behaviour change and how that manifests itself across societies. The first of this series of panel discussions will be livestreamed on September 29, 2020, with others to follow over the coming year.

To join the first livestreamed discussion to be held as part of the WHF’s “World’s Most Urgent Heart-to-Heart” panel series on Tuesday, September 29 at 3:00PM CET, please register here: <https://crm.world-heart-federation.org/civicrm/event/register?reset=1&id=7> or view the discussion live on Twitter @worldheartfed or by clicking here <https://twitter.com/worldheartfed>.

### **Getting Involved in World Heart Day**

In light of restrictions on social gatherings due to COVID-19, this year the WHF will be moving most of its activities for World Heart Day online. To learn more and get involved, please visit <http://worldheartday.org>.

### **World Heart Day is proud to be supported by AstraZeneca, Boehringer Ingelheim and Lilly Alliance, and Pfizer**

**Joris Silon, Senior Vice President, Cardiovascular, Renal and Metabolism, AstraZeneca,** said: “Cardiovascular diseases, including serious conditions like heart failure and stroke, are the world’s leading cause of death and the burden continues to increase each year. In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, these patients are at an even higher risk of severe outcomes and complications. We are proud to partner with the World Heart Federation to improve awareness of these conditions and risk factors and help save lives through prevention, earlier diagnosis, and enhanced disease management.”

**Suneet Varma, Global President, Rare Disease, Pfizer** said: “During these unprecedented times, it’s critical that we ‘Use Heart’ to continue to pioneer innovation, champion health equity and improve care for all of those impacted by heart diseases, including rare and underrecognized heart conditions. We’re proud to continue our partnership with the World Heart Federation for World Heart Day and support their efforts to unite stakeholders around the world to beat cardiovascular disease.”

**Leonard Glass, Vice President of Global Medical Affairs, Eli Lilly and Company,** said: “World Heart Day is a pivotal moment each year to highlight the importance of heart health and the need to continue to improve outcomes for patients with cardiovascular disease, with and without type 2 diabetes. We are proud to be part of the World Heart Federation’s network in creating global momentum to help achieve this. Lilly, in partnership with Boehringer Ingelheim, is dedicated to supporting patients and healthcare providers during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond by advancing treatments and pioneering research. Together we can address global public health challenges driven by the cardiovascular, renal and metabolic diseases, restoring balance between these systems.”

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**Waheed Jamal, Corporate Vice President and Head of Cardiometabolic Medicine, Boehringer Ingelheim**, said: “World Heart Day shines a powerful light on the vital importance of good cardiovascular health, and Boehringer Ingelheim, in partnership with Lilly, is proud to be continuing to support the World Heart Federation in these efforts. People with diabetes are twice as likely to have heart failure than those without, and one in two people with type 2 diabetes worldwide die of a cardiovascular event. Recent findings indicate COVID-19 poses a higher risk for people living with cardio-renal-metabolic conditions, so this year World Heart Day is even more significant in demonstrating the importance of supporting these patients. The Boehringer Ingelheim and Lilly Alliance is committed to improving the lives of people living with cardiovascular disease, its associated conditions, and in understanding the interconnection of the heart, kidneys, and metabolic systems.”

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#### **About World Heart Day**

World Heart Day is celebrated each year on 29 September to raise awareness and mobilize international action against cardiovascular disease (CVD), the leading cause of death on the planet. It is the global initiative under which individuals, governments and the entire heart community come together to engage in fun activities, increase public education, and advocate for universal access to CVD prevention, detection and treatment. For more information, visit <http://worldheartday.org>.

#### **About COVID-19 Study & Enrolment**

The WHF COVID-19 and Cardiovascular disease (CVD) study was launched earlier this year to better understand the intersection between COVID-19 and CVD. WHF invited its Members to identify and endorse hospitals or other medical facilities (recruiting centres) treating COVID-19 patients in their respective countries. It is a global prospective cohort study and each participating centre is recruiting between 50 and 200 consecutive COVID-19 patients. There is no limit in the number of sites that can take part. For further information contact Lana Raspail at [lane.raspail@worldheart.org](mailto:lane.raspail@worldheart.org).

#### **About the World Heart Federation**

The World Heart Federation (WHF) is an umbrella organisation representing the global cardiovascular community, uniting patient, medical, and scientific groups. WHF influences policies and shares knowledge to promote cardiovascular health for everyone. WHF connects the cardiovascular community, translates science into policy and promotes the exchange of information and knowledge to achieve heart health for everyone. For more information, visit <https://www.world-heart-federation.org>.

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