BioSpectrum
the business of Bio & Health Sciences
ASIA EDITION

Tobacco is responsible for more than one in ten deaths: WHF

May 29, 2018 | News

The theme of WHO World No Tobacco Day 2018 on 31 May is: "Tobacco breaks hearts, choose health and not tobacco"



World No Tobacco Day is a World Health Organization initiative that will be held on 31 May and this year will focus on raising awareness of the link between tobacco and cardiovascular disease (CVD). Tobacco is associated with around 7 million deaths worldwide every year, directly related to the consumption of and indirect exposure to smoke.

Smoking damages blood vessels and thickens blood. It increases blood rate and blood pressure and replaces oxygen, making it an important risk factor in the development of coronary disease, stroke and peripheral vascular disease. Furthermore, it is the second most prevalent cause of CVD after hypertension. Given that CVDs constitute the number one cause of death in the world, the World Heart Federation (WHF) applauds this initiative by the World Health Organization (WHO).

Despite the general public being familiar with the impact that tobacco causes on health, the WHO highlights the fact that it is rarely thought of as being one of the main causes for CVD.

According to WHF President Professor David Wood: "Tobacco consumption constitutes the main avoidable risk for cardiovascular health. Because of this, it is our duty to help our patients with heart disease to quit smoking, and for those patients at high risk of having a heart attack or stroke to help them quit as well. By doing so we can help all our patients to reduce their risk but even more importantly we need to raise awareness and educate the general public about the impact tobacco on our hearts and crucially the importance of children and young people never starting."

Almost 80% of the one billion smokers around the world live in average and lower income countries where the burden of illness and death associated with tobacco is much greater. With this in mind, WHF through its "Because every heartbeat matters" policy is promoting an agenda of greater access to care and the prevention, control and management of

cardiovascular illnesses for everyone, regardless of status or circumstance, with the objective of extending and improving quality of life.

"We firmly believe in the need to continually highlight the risks of tobacco to the health of our hearts and circulation. By bringing together healthcare professionals, governments, institutions, industry and the general public around a common cause we can continue to educate people about the dangers of tobacco and unhealthy lifestyles, and promote the need for universal access to care," adds Prof. Wood. To aid this education, WHF will soon be releasing two fact sheets on smoking cessation: one for the general public and one for professionals.

On 29 September, WHF will be celebrating World Heart Day with the objective of raising awareness about the importance of good cardiovascular health. One of their key messages is around the immediate and long-term health benefits brought about by quitting smoking: Within just 20 minutes, heart rate and blood pressure drops

12 hours after stopping smoking, the carbon monoxide levels in blood drops and returns to normal levels

Between 2 and 12 weeks, circulation will have improved and pulmonary function increased

Over the first 9 months, coughing and breathlessness diminishes

One year after quitting smoking, the risk of contracting a coronary disease is approximately half that of a smoker

Between 5 and 15 years after quitting smoking, the risk of suffering from a cerebrovascular accident drops to that of a non-smoker

15 years after having quit smoking, the risk of suffering from a coronary disease equates to that of a non-smoker