

## HEALTH PROFESSIONALS AND TOBACCO CONTROL: WNTD 2005

The Tobacco Free Initiative proposes that World No Tobacco Day 2005 focus on Health Professionals and Tobacco Control. The explanation of this rationale follows:

### Introduction

In May 2003, the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC) was adopted. One year later, at the end of the signature period -29 June 2004- the treaty had been signed by 168 countries and the European Community, and had more than half the number of Party States needed for its entry into force. The good response that the WHO FCTC has received from the civil society and governments is proven by the number of NGOs involved in the WHO FCTC process, the number of tobacco control programmes currently in place around the world, and the number of signatories and parties the Treaty has achieved one year after its adoption.

The WHO Member States with their response to the Treaty have shown their firm commitment to tackle the public health challenges posed by tobacco. The Treaty outlines in its provisions the measures that countries need to take to achieve its objectives. Issues as diverse as price and tax measures, cross-border smuggling, illicit trade, advertising and promotion need to be tackled by governments when designing their tobacco control programmes.

When governments are getting ready for the full implementation of the Treaty, a continued support from the civil society is fundamental. The WHO FCTC in its preamble especially emphasizes *'the special contribution of nongovernmental organizations and other members of civil society not affiliated with the tobacco industry, including **health professional bodies**, women's, youth, environmental and consumer groups, and academic and health care institutions, to tobacco control efforts nationally and internationally and the vital importance of their participation national and international tobacco control efforts'* (WHO FCTC, 2003).

### Tobacco control and health professionals

Following the WHO FCTC preamble, WHO convened a meeting in January 2004 with International Health Professionals Organizations' representatives to explore ways in which Health Professionals could participate more actively in the WHO FCTC process and how they could contribute to tobacco control/public health goals. Health Professionals include not only medical doctors, but also other professionals, like nurses, dentists, midwives, psychologists and psychiatrists, physiotherapists, pharmacists and other health related professions.

Comprehensive tobacco programmes aimed at controlling the use of tobacco efficiently should consider to put in place a mix of measures at country and

international level. This mix of measures should include legislation and pricing measures, but also prevention -through education, communication, informational campaigns that raise awareness of the effects of tobacco on health- and other demand reduction measures concerning tobacco dependence and cessation. Health Professionals have a fundamental role to play in these ambits. They reach a high percentage of the population. Health Professionals have the opportunity to help people change their behaviour and they can give advice, guidance and answers to questions related to the consequences of tobacco use, they can help patients to stop smoking –especially those patients who have tobacco-related illnesses.

Studies have shown that even brief counseling by Health Professionals on the dangers of smoking and the importance of quitting is one of the most cost-effective methods of reducing smoking.

Health Professionals should also play a predominant role in preventive measures, especially when considering the youth. They have the opportunity to promote social norm change, and forewarn children and adolescents of the dangers of tobacco.

Health Professionals should be the example that a healthy society reflects upon. Many associations and establishments have started -and should continue- to designate their own workplaces as smoke- and tobacco-free. Health Professionals students that are trained on tobacco control during their educational years become more efficient at identifying and treating patients in tobacco-related issues, and are able to act as informers that can prevent tobacco use and can support their patients cessation efforts. Adding tobacco control as a part of the training and education programme of all health professionals can result, ultimately, in a drastic reduction of smoking prevalence.

At the legislative level, Health Professionals can use their influence in their local and national communities to encourage preventive tobacco control measures to be put in place at country and at international level.

WHO is convinced that tobacco control efforts are more likely to be sustained when incorporated into existing national, state and district level health structures and linked with existing positions and accountability processes. Involvement of the governmental health sector is expected to increase awareness among health personnel and contribute to the development of sustainable tobacco control programmes at the country level. Such a systematic approach will also pave the way for multi-sectoral acceptance of tobacco control efforts in countries.

#### **Code of practice on tobacco control for health professional organizations**

Health Professionals that attended the January 2004 meeting (close to 50, from 29 different International organizations) were enthusiastic about this approach. They presented and showed how, in most cases, they already had in place

similar approaches to tobacco control among their own organizations and affiliates.

All the participants deliberated and created what they would like to be a standard code of practice on tobacco control for their organizations. This code of practice lists 14 action points by which Health Professionals themselves can contribute to tobacco control, including the support to the WHO FCTC process. The code of practice was adopted by all the representatives present at the meeting and has been promoted and shared since among their members and affiliates.

The code of practice has been translated into 5 of the WHO official languages (Chinese translation still pending); and other languages at the Health Professionals own initiative.

### **Global Health Professionals Tobacco Survey**

The Health Professionals agreed, and it was included in the code of practice, that they should be a role model to others. By promoting smoke-free workplaces and a smoke-free culture they should set the example to follow by their patients. One of the aspects of World No Tobacco Day 2005 will be to conduct a pilot survey on smoking: the Global Health Professionals Students Tobacco Survey -following the principles of the Global Youth Tobacco Survey, in collaboration with CDC. The development of the survey is already in place, with samples that will be collected from 6 countries (one on every WHO region). The results of this pilot survey will be used on the materials to be produced.

### **Leverage and dissemination**

One of the reasons to have chosen this theme, is the possibility to use information and resources from existing initiatives. Health Professional organizations are aware of their potential role and responsibility in tobacco control and several organizations have already initiated specific activities to this extent. For example, a Doctors Manifesto for Tobacco Control was launched on 21 October 2002 , with the support of medical associations worldwide. Many individual associations have their own codes regarding tobacco control (i.e. Pharmacists against Tobacco, had previously to the code of practice their own no-Smoking action in Pharmacies). This group in particular dedicated WNTD 2004 to "the role of the pharmacist in promoting a tobacco free future", including the promotion of the code of practice adopted during the meeting convened by WHO.

WNTD 2005 is a good occasion to leverage these efforts, and capitalize on the outcomes and the enthusiasm of the participants of that meeting, disseminating the outcomes of the meeting and adding new information that can have the joint effort of different group of professionals towards one cause: tobacco control.

- Ends

Follow the international associations that were present at the January meeting, existing initiatives and the code of practice approved by them.

**Associations:**

1. Asian Consultancy on Tobacco Control
2. Egyptian Medical Syndicate
3. European Forum of National Nursing and Midwifery Associations and WHO
4. European Forum of Medical Associations
5. European Respiratory Society (ERS)
6. EuroPharm Forum
7. European Medical Association on Smoking and Health (EMASH)
8. FDI World Dental Federation
9. Initiative for Cardiovascular Health Research in Developing Countries
10. International Agency on Tobacco and Health
11. International Commission on Occupational Health (ICOH)
12. International Council of Nurses (ICN)
13. International Federation of Medical Student Associations (IFMSA)
14. International Non Governmental Coalition Against Tobacco (INGCAT)
15. International Pharmaceutical Federation
16. International Society of Nurses in Cancer Care
17. International Union Against Cancer
18. International Union Against Tuberculosis and Lung Disease
19. Medical Women's International Association
20. National Centre for Problems of Healthy Lifestyle Development
21. Nurses Network Against Tobacco and Substance Abuse of Thailand
22. SEARPharm Forum
23. Sindicato Médico del Uruguay
24. World Federation of Chiropractic
25. World Heart Federation
26. World Medical Association
27. World Organization of Family Doctors (WONCA)
28. World Self-Medication Industry (WSMI)
29. World Vision International

**Initiatives:**

<http://www.adra.org/images/AADRA/FirstMonday604.pdf>

<http://www.worldheart.org/pdf/activities.advocacy.tobacco.code.practice.pdf>

[http://www.globalfamilydoctor.com/publications/news/april\\_2004/resource2.htm](http://www.globalfamilydoctor.com/publications/news/april_2004/resource2.htm)

<http://www.fip.org/pharmacistsagainsttobacco/2004WNTDFIPCampaign.pdf>

<http://www.ensp.org/projects.cfm#>

<http://doctorsmanifesto.org/>

[http://www.wfc.org/english/view\\_page.asp?record\\_id=29](http://www.wfc.org/english/view_page.asp?record_id=29) (WFC's Chiropractors Against Tobacco: Wellness Project)

## Code of Practice

### Code of practice on tobacco control for health professional organizations

Preamble: In order to contribute actively to the reduction of tobacco consumption and include tobacco control in the public health agenda at national, regional and global levels, it is hereby agreed that health professional organizations will:

1. Encourage and support their members to be role models by not using tobacco and by promoting a tobacco-free culture.
2. Assess and address the tobacco consumption patterns and tobacco-control attitudes of their members through surveys and the introduction of appropriate policies.
3. Make their own organizations' premises and events tobacco-free and encourage their members to do the same.
4. Include tobacco control in the agenda of all relevant health-related congresses and conferences.
5. Advise their members to routinely ask patients and clients about tobacco consumption and exposure to tobacco smoke –using evidence-based approaches and best practices–, give advice on how to quit smoking and ensure appropriate follow-up of their cessation goals.
6. Influence health institutions and educational centres to include tobacco control in their health professionals' curricula, through continued education and other training programmes.
7. Actively participate in World No Tobacco Day every 31 May.
8. Refrain from accepting any kind of tobacco industry support – financial or otherwise –, and from investing in the tobacco industry, and encourage their members to do the same.
9. Ensure that their organization has a stated policy on any commercial or other kind of relationship with partners who interact with or have interests in the tobacco industry through a declaration of interest.
10. Prohibit the sale or promotion of tobacco products on their premises, and encourage their members to do the same.
11. Actively support governments in the process leading to signature, ratification and implementation of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control.
12. Dedicate financial and/or other resources to tobacco control – including dedicating resources to the implementation of this code of practice.
13. Participate in the tobacco-control activities of health professional networks.
14. Support campaigns for tobacco-free public places.

Adopted and signed by the participants of the WHO Informal Meeting on Health Professionals and Tobacco Control; 28-30 January 2004; Geneva, Switzerland