

Launch of World Health Statistics 2011 shows growing burden of NCDs

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GENEVA, 13 May 2011 -- An increasing number of countries are facing a double burden of disease as the prevalence of risk factors for chronic diseases such as diabetes, heart diseases and cancers increase and many countries still struggle to reduce maternal and child deaths caused by infectious diseases, for the Millennium Development Goals, according to the World Health Statistics 2011 released by the World Health Organization (WHO) today.

Noncommunicable diseases such heart diseases, stroke, diabetes and cancer, now make up two-thirds of all deaths globally, due to the population aging and the spread of risk factors associated with globalization and urbanization. The control of risk factors such as tobacco use, sedentary lifestyle, unhealthy diet and excessive use of alcohol becomes more critical.

The latest WHO figures showed that about 4 out of 10 men and 1 in 11 women are using tobacco and about 1 in 8 adults is obese. In addition many developing countries continue to battle health issues such as pneumonia, diarrhoea and malaria that are most likely to kill children under the age of five. In 2009, 40% of all child deaths were among newborns (aged 28 days or less).

Much more needs to be done to achieve the MDGs by the target date of 2015, but progress has accelerated:

- Child mortality declined at 2.7% per year since 2000, twice as fast as during the 1990s (1.3%). Mortality among children under five years fell from 12.4 million in 1990 to 8.1 million in 2009.
- Maternal mortality declined at 3.3% per year since 2000, almost twice as fast in the decade after 2000 than during the 1990s (2%). The number of women dying as a result of complications during pregnancy and childbirth has decreased from 546,000 in 1990 to 358,000 in 2008. "This evidence really shows that no country in the world can address health from either an infectious disease perspective or a noncommunicable disease one. Everyone must develop a health system that addresses the full range of the health threats in both areas," says Ties Boerma, Director of WHO's Department of Health Statistics and Informatics.

The report also shows that more money is being spent on health and people can expect to live longer (life expectancy in 2009 was 68 years, up from 64 years in 1990); but the gap in health spending between low- and high-income countries remains very large:

- In low-income countries, per capita, health expenditure is an estimated USD 32 (or about 5.4% of gross domestic product) and in high-income countries it is US\$ 4590 (or about 11% of gross domestic product).
- High-income countries have, per capita, on average 10 times more doctors, 12 times more nurses and midwives and 30 times more dentists than low-income countries.
- Virtually all deliveries of babies in high-income countries are attended by skilled health personnel; but this is the case for only 40% of deliveries in low-income countries. World Health Statistics 2011 is an annual report based on more than 100 health indicators reported by WHO's 193 Member States and other reliable sources.

These data provide a snapshot of the global health situation and trends. However, timely, accurate health information is hard to obtain in some parts of the world, because the country health information systems are weak. "While the World Health Statistics 2011 provide clear evidence of the improvements occurring in information gathering, there are still large gaps in global health data," says Colin Mathers, Coordinator of Mortality and Burden of Disease at WHO. "WHO is committed to working with its Member States, other UN agencies and partners to continue to improve the information available to monitor the health of the world's people and the effectiveness of health systems and interventions."

The release of the report coincides with the launch of WHO's new Global Health Observatory, a new website that serves as a one-stop shop for data and analyses on health priorities around the world.

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The Observatory provides easy access to the world's largest and most comprehensive collection of health data, bringing together WHO's data from all major health and disease programmes. It includes easy access to over 50 databases and 800 indicators with analyses of the global health situation and trends, covering priority health topics such as child, maternal and reproductive health, infectious diseases, noncommunicable diseases and risk factors, environmental health, mortality and burden of diseases, road safety, health systems and equity.

An online version of the World Health Statistics dataset is also available through the Observatory.

The World Health Statistics 2011 can be found at : <http://www.who.int/gho/publications/en/> [1]

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