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Global fight to improve asthma ramped up

A new global campaign to combat asthma is being led by the Global Asthma Network.

This Friday the Global Asthma Network will launch the Global Asthma Report 2018 in Helsinki, Finland, at the General Meeting of the Global Alliance Against Chronic Respiratory Diseases of the World Health Organization (WHO).

The Global Asthma Report 2018 is an 88 page report which is a cutting edge State-of-the-Art document, with contributions from 53 experts around the globe. The Report is an update on the state of asthma globally, including research data on asthma hospital admissions, mortality, prevalence, severity, and burden, risk factors and management.

A large proportion of people in the world with asthma are not getting adequate treatment. This Report includes 17 chapters, with up-to-date information, and has several key recommendations to WHO, Governments, Health Authorities, Health Professionals, Professional Societies and Patient Organisations. Asthma is put in the context of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and the non-communicable disease (NCD) agenda. "Political commitment and action are required to make the burden of asthma a thing of the past," says Professor Asher. "If these recommendations were followed, the serious burden of asthma globally would be reduced."

"Millions of people suffer from asthma because they do not get access to the medicines that lessen their breathing difficulties," she says. "Avoidable asthma deaths – about 1000 per day - are still occurring due to inappropriate management of asthma, including over-reliance on reliever medication rather than preventer medication," says Professor Asher. "Asthma is a particularly serious burden in low- and middle-income countries which are least able to afford the costs." "Economies suffer because asthma keeps people away from work, or if they are at work, asthma stops them working effectively." The economic costs of asthma in Europe were 19 billion Euros for 2011.

Good long-term management can reduce the burden of asthma, she says. This includes using relatively simple measures within a systematic national or local strategy which can improve early detection of asthma and provide effective preventive treatment.

"Quality-assured essential asthma medicines are not available to many people with asthma," says Professor Asher. "Guaranteed access to affordable quality-assured essential asthma medicines is vital to improving asthma outcomes.

"While our knowledge has increased, there remain significant gaps in the data about asthma. New surveys are needed to update asthma trends, assess the burden of asthma, examine access to effective management and understand the causes," she says. "The Global Asthma Network is

currently undertaking a new study of global surveillance: prevalence, severity, management and risk factors. There are 353 centres in 135 countries involved in some way in GAN, with 127 centres in 53 countries registered and participating in GAN Phase I www.globalasthmanetwork.org.

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