

5 May 2015

WORLD ASTHMA DAY

People die of asthma every day - it is time to take control

Tuesday 5 May is World Asthma Day - it is time to take control. Every day, millions of people around the world suffer distressing breathlessness and disability and many people die due to asthma. It affects men and women, boys and girls, of all ages. It stresses hospitals and health systems, families and workplaces, and whole economies. The yearly cost of asthma is enormous: USD 56 billion in the US alone. Asthma is a hugely neglected public health and 'development' problem in the world. Much of the problem can be solved by concerted global public health action.

The Global Asthma Network www.globalasthmanetwork.org has published the Global Asthma Report 2014 www.globalasthmareport.org, which sets out the strategies required to achieve these gains. Everyone needs to be involved: The World Health Organization (WHO), Governments, Health Authorities, communities (including affected communities) and health care workers. The Report sets out the specific actions they each need to take.

Good long-term management can reduce the burden of asthma. 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, yet guaranteed access to these medicines is vital to improving asthma outcomes.

"Even one preventable asthma death is a tragedy" says Professor Innes Asher, Chair of the Global Asthma Network. *"In every country measures can be taken to improve asthma"*.

The Global Asthma Network, led by an international Steering Group, is prepared and ready to begin a new Global Surveillance: Prevalence, Severity and Risk Factor Study involving 120 countries. In 2012 the leader of WHO, Dr Margaret Chan, said *"Accurate assessment of the global, regional and country health situation and trends is critical for evidence-based decision making in public health.... The real need is to close the data gaps"*.

The Global Asthma Network urgently needs funding to continue to close the data gaps for asthma. The central coordination centre is located at the University of Auckland and funding is required so that this vital work can be continued. Donations will be gratefully accepted and can be made through our website <https://www.givingtoauckland.org.nz/en/FundPages/global-asthma-network.html>

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