ROUND TABLE CONFERENCE ON NON-COMMUNICABLE CHRONIC DISEASES- AMRITSAR, PUNJAB

THE NCCDs SCENARIO

Changing lifestyles and stressed workplace environment has given rise to non-communicable chronic diseases worldwide. NCCDs include diseases — which include cardiovascular conditions, hypertension, type 2 diabetes mellitus, and so on— affecting people of all ages, nationalities and classes. From a projected total of 58 million deaths from all causes in 2005, it is estimated that chronic diseases will account for 35 million each year – or 60% of all deaths worldwide, which is double the number of deaths from all infectious diseases (including HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria), maternal and perinatal conditions, and nutritional deficiencies combined. Only 20% of these deaths will be in high-income countries, while 80% will occur in low-income and middle-income countries. One quarter of these deaths--almost 9 million in 2005--are in men and women aged <60 years. This has a substantial impact on countries’ possibilities for economic growth and now is a public health menace.

Developing countries are much more vulnerable to the consequences of this emerging burden. At the present stage of India’s health transition, chronic diseases contribute to an estimated 53% of deaths and 44% of disability-adjusted life-years lost. Demographic and socioeconomic factors are hastening the health transition; over the next decade, India’s burgeoning consumer class is likely headed for an onslaught of chronic diseases, including diabetes, hypertension, cancer, and HIV/AIDS. In India, four million people die due to heart attack annually. According to projections, annually there would be an increase of one million. India is now home to the largest population of diabetics in the world, at 30 million, and that number is expected to grow to 57 million by 2025. Thus, there is a growing need to increase focus on public health initiatives that can address prevention of chronic non-communicable diseases.
Common, modifiable risk factors underlie the major chronic diseases. These risk factors explain the vast majority of chronic disease deaths at all ages, in both men and women, and in all parts of the world. They include unhealthy diet; physical inactivity; harmful use of alcohol; and tobacco use. Although chronic diseases are among the most common and costly health problems, they are also among the most preventable. Public health efforts on health promotion and disease prevention are critical to achieving better health outcomes for people worldwide.

**NEED FOR ROUND TABLE**

NCCDs result in a significant impact on health and social welfare systems, through premature death, long-term illness or disability. Health care costs and challenges increase dramatically with the number of co-morbidities. Hence, there is a need to intensify efforts to identify challenges and opportunities to strengthen programs for the prevention and control of NCCDs.

Health services are frequently oriented towards care rather than prevention, and acute rather than chronic models of care, leading to missed opportunities for prevention, early detection and treatment. A crucial aspect of establishing programs for disease control globally is to identify priorities with respect to prevention and treatment. Everybody has an important role to play in the prevention and control of NCD. The need of the time is to galvanize the health, science and communities into action.

This round table was envisaged to involve all stakeholders- including those outside the health sector to:

- Identify the disease burden, risk factors and prevention of NCDs among
  
  (i) the ageing Indian population
  
  (ii) young adults and
(iii) women

through panel discussion and opinions

- Empower the vulnerable population (women groups and senior citizens) to promote their own health, interact effectively with health services and be active partners in managing disease

- Advocate the need for a multi-sectoral approach that mobilises the combined energy, resources and expertise of all stakeholders

**The objectives of the round table discussion were:**

- Focus on accessibility, availability and affordability of clinical and diagnostic services for treatment and prevention of NCDs.

- Understand the role of various sectors- health care service providers, media, civil societies, women and senior citizen health groups in prevention of NCDs

- Focus on experiences of these sectors on:
  1. Burden of NCD in terms of morbidity and mortality
  2. Life style modifications
  3. Different case scenarios from a clinicians perspective
  4. Variability in NCD trends with respect to age, gender & economic status
  5. Appropriate and feasible screening tests for NCDs
  6. Public health approach for prevention of NCDs
  7. Preparedness of the society and health for NCDs
ORGANISATION’S OVERVIEW

**Chronic Care Foundation:** Chronic Care Foundation is a National NGO wants to increase the capacity, efficiency, productivity, reach and quality of Indian health care system. By endeavoring in making the system more efficient and effective and better managed for those now covered and not covered by health insurance, CCF plans to increase the opportunities for coverage expansions to the under privileged and lower income groups. CCF is a National NGO wants to increase the capacity, efficiency, productivity, reach and quality of Indian health care system. By endeavoring in making the system more efficient and effective and better managed for those now covered and not covered by health insurance, CCF plans to increase the opportunities for coverage expansions to the under privileged and lower income groups.

THE PROGRAM

The round table conference of health care professionals, NGO professionals, media, women group representatives and senior citizens health group representatives was organized in Amritsar, Punjab on March 31, 2011. The conference was jointly organized by Chronic Care Foundation (CCF), New Delhi, ISLE Senior Citizen Estates Pvt Ltd, Fortis Escorts Hospital (Amritsar Punjab) and Nanhi Chaan. It largely focused on accessibility and availability of health information and clinical and diagnostic services for treatment and prevention of NCDs. There were discussions on the role of various sectors - health care service providers, media, civil societies, women and senior citizen health groups in prevention of NCDs.

The conference began with a key note address by **Dr. D S Ratna Devi, Chief Executive Officer, Chronic Care Foundation.** Discussing the global and India specific burden of chronic non communicable diseases, Dr. Devi
presented the results of the National Programme for Prevention of Non Communicable Chronic Diseases (NPPNCCD) undertaken by CCF. She also highlighted the initiatives and activities undertaken by CCF towards prevention of NCDs. Expressing her concern, she said that despite understanding the dire consequences of NCDs on individual, family, society and country, at large, the response to the preventable causes has been poor.

Dr. Devi emphasized that it possible to prevent or modify risk factors; prevent the onset or progression of disease; prevent disability; and prevent early or painful death. Health outcomes can be improved by early detection and appropriate treatment. The challenge lies in ensuring that existing knowledge is better and more equitably applied so that all stand to share in the benefits.

She asserted that the greatest potential for gain lies in a more concentrated, multi-stakeholder approach; it is essential to deal with the increasing incidence of non communicable chronic disease and aid prevention. While discussing the role of each stakeholder present, Dr. Devi emphasized the need an active media representation to enable large scale dissemination of useful information. Media, with technical support from organisations like Chronic Care Foundation and Fortis Escorts Hospitals, can effectively highlight the relationship between determinants and health; the need for all sectors to take a role in tackling these; ensure people have access to important health information that affects their health; and encourage and facilitate information-seeking behaviour.

Address by Dr. D S Ratna Devi was followed by a presentation by Dr. H.P. Singh, Medical Superintendent, Fortis Escorts Hospital, Amritsar, Punjab on NCCDs and geriatric care. Dr. Singh said that the early onset of NCCDs and high prevalence of causative risk factors leads to complications as age increases. Therefore, the aim of geriatric care is to reduce or postpone the onset of age-related illness so that an elderly person suffers ill health only for a short period before death and is able to lead a healthy life then.
He highlighted the fact that health problems in elderly are often multi-dimensional - biological, social, emotional, psychological and financial. If tackled by the medical fraternity alone, it touches only the tip of the iceberg. Therefore, a more integrated approach is required to (i) facilitate dissemination of health related information to those who have limited knowledge and (ii) provide accessible health services to all elderly especially those who are unable to reach to the health care provider. The approach would not only strengthen the health relevant knowledge base of individuals, but would facilitate early screening and better access to health care.

Dr. Singh also appreciated the collaborative efforts by apex institutions like Fortis Escorts Hospitals (Amritsar), CCF, ISLE and Nanhi Chaan in addressing the issue of public health concern.

Summarizing, Dr. Singh asserted that NCCDs in India, call for immediate action. He said that events like these build health literacy and capacity among non-health professionals who impact on health and its determinants, such as women groups, senior citizen health groups, social workers and journalists.

This was followed by a presentation by Mr. Aman Batra, Chief Operating Officer, Impact Senior Living Estates Pvt. Ltd. (ISLE). Mr. Batra reemphasized the fact that chronic NCDs are one amidst many age-related problems that afflict senior citizens. Further given the increasing life expectancy in India, NCD’s are expected to become the number one disease burden in India. He asserted that the need is to avail better integrate health care. Therefore, ISLE-India’s first service-enabled community for senior citizens- has engaged with Fortis Healthcare as its healthcare partner and is concentrating on how best to deliver services which are in tune with the needs of senior citizens.

The participants shared the experiences of these sectors, with the audience, when it comes to burden of NCDs, leading way to wide ranging discussions. The discussions largely focussed on issues related to clustering of factors causing NCCDs were discussed. Questions were framed on reasons for
increasing prevalence of NCCDs among urban-rural populations. Dr. Singh recommended that chronic diseases like CVDs, Hypertension, Obesity and Diabetes can be prevented by:

- Consuming healthy diet-Avoiding trans fats, foods rich in sugars, and simple carbohydrates
- Including more fruits, vegetables and fibre in diet, stress upon MUFA and PUFA
- Being physically active
- Avoiding addictions- tobacco use and smoking
- Avoiding stress
- Weight management
- Management of Blood pressure, blood sugar and lipids

RECOMMENDATIONS

Summarising, the following were identified as the challenges/recommendations for combating the problem of non-communicable chronic diseases:

- Prevention throughout life is effective and must be regarded as an investment in health and development.
- People should be empowered to promote their own health, interact effectively with health services and be active partners in managing disease. This can be achieved by
  - Providing more structured knowledge for health promotion
  - Promoting healthier dietary choices through effective education
  - Promoting physical activity through appropriate planning of cities and work-sites
- Patients should be more proactive in learning about the disease they are suffering from- treatment, management and follow up care (both medicinal and nutritional).
• Society should create health-supporting environments, thereby also making healthy choices easier choices.

• Health and medical services should be fit for purpose, responding to the present disease burden and increasing opportunities for health promotion.
  
  o Improved and better access to health care to prevent complications of chronic non-communicable disease
  
  o Early detection of individuals with risk factors using cost effective tools

• Create forums that sustainably offer information on NCCDs and health services available
  
  o Women health groups
  
  o Adolescents health groups
  
  o Senior citizens health groups
  
  o Patient forums

• Involve all stakeholders including clinicians, media, women groups, senior citizen health groups, civil societies and the private sector.

• Devise media campaigns for building health literacy
  
  o Communicate health risks and information to the public
  
  o Ensure people have access to important health information that affects their health and encourage and facilitate information-seeking behaviour
  
  o Highlight evidence-based and highly cost-effective interventions