

Towards a healthy ageing

STAR HEALTH DESK

Worldwide, life expectancy of older people continues to rise. By 2050, the world's population aged 60 years and older is expected to total 2 billion, up from 841 million today. Eighty per cent of these older people will be living in low-income and middle-income countries like Bangladesh.

This demographic change has several implications for public health. Good health is key if older people are to remain independent and to play a part in family and community life. Life-long health promotion and disease prevention activities can prevent or delay the onset of noncommunicable and chronic diseases, such as heart disease, stroke and cancer, the major cause of death in older people.

A major new series on health and ageing, published in The Lancet, warns that unless health systems find effective strategies to address the problems faced by an ageing world population, the growing burden of chronic disease will greatly affect the quality of life of older people. As people across the world live longer, soaring levels of chronic



illness and diminished wellbeing are poised to become a major global public health challenge.

Although people are living longer, they are not necessarily healthier than before — nearly a quarter (23%) of the overall global burden of death and illness is in people aged over 60, and much of this burden is attributable to long-term illness

caused by diseases such as cancer, chronic respiratory diseases, heart disease, musculoskeletal diseases (such as arthritis and osteoporosis), and mental and neurological disorders.

This long-term burden of illness and diminished wellbeing affects patients, their families, health systems, and economies, and is forecast to accelerate. For example,

latest estimates indicate that the number of people with dementia is expected to rise from 44 million now, to 135 million by 2050.

Apart from the universally applicable interventions, experts urge countries to monitor the health and functioning of their ageing populations to understand health trends and design programmes that meet the

specific needs identified.

Strategies are needed that better prevent and manage chronic conditions by extending affordable health care to all older adults and take into consideration the physical and social environment. Examples include changing policies to encourage older adults to remain part of the workforce for longer (e.g., removing tax disincentives to work past retirement age), emphasising low-cost disease prevention and early detection rather than treatment (e.g., reducing salt intake and increasing uptake of vaccines), making better use of technology (e.g., mobile clinics for rural populations), and training health-care staff in the management of multiple chronic conditions.

The world's growing population of older people plays a critical role through volunteering, transmitting experience and knowledge, helping their families with caring responsibilities and increasing their participation in the paid labour force. Now, we have to play our role so that every older can live a healthier, happier, and more productive life.

Source: World Health Organisation

DID YOU KNOW?

Supplements, medicine can be dangerous mix

Taking vitamins or other dietary supplements along with medication can be dangerous, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) warns.

Dietary supplements can alter the absorption and metabolism of prescription and over-the-counter medications. Some may increase the effect of medication, and other may decrease it, the FDA explained in an agency news release.

For example, the supplement St. John's Wort (herbal used to treat depression) can make birth control pills less effective, the FDA reported. Both the herbal supplement ginkgo biloba and vitamin E can thin blood. Mixing either supplement with the prescription blood thinner warfarin or aspirin could increase the risk of internal bleeding or stroke, the report said.

Dietary supplements are widely used around the world. Although many people take supplements to make sure they get proper nutrition, the FDA said there is no substitute for eating a healthy diet, and products labeled as "natural" or "herbal" are not necessarily harmless. This is particularly true for children. Because children's metabolisms are so unique that at different ages they metabolise substances at different rates.

The FDA added the following tips for consumers: • Every time you visit the doctor, bring a list of all the dietary supplements and medications you take. This list should include dosages and frequency.

• Tell your doctor if your health has changed, including any recent illnesses, surgeries or other procedures. You should also tell your doctor if you are pregnant or breast-feeding.

HEALTH bulletin

Irregular heartbeat doubles risk for silent strokes

Atrial fibrillation, a common condition where the heart beats abnormally, may more than double the risk of "silent" strokes, a new review published in Annals of Internal Medicine suggests.

Silent strokes have no signs or symptoms, but can affect thinking and memory. In addition, recent research has shown that atrial fibrillation is associated with a 40 percent increased risk for mental impairment, the researchers noted.

Sleep apnea may steal some of your memory

Sleep apnea may make it hard for you to remember simple things, such as where you parked your car or left your house keys, according to a new study published in the Journal of Neuroscience.

In sleep apnea, people have one or more pauses in breathing or shallow breaths while you sleep.

Tests on people with severe sleep apnea showed that this ability — called spatial memory — was impaired when sleep apnea disrupted rapid eye movement (REM) sleep, even when other stages of sleep were not affected. REM sleep is the deepest level of sleep, during which dreams typically occur.



MSF helps respond to an upsurge of malaria cases

STAR HEALTH REPORT

Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) has helped respond to an upsurge in malaria cases in the Bandarban district of the Chittagong Hill Tracts in Bangladesh, treating nearly 1,700 patients in the last three months, the international medical organisation informed recently.

In mid-August, MSF launched an intervention in the district to support the Ministry of Health (MoH) of Bangladesh and other health providers already present in the area.

The MoH had internally declared an emergency in Bandarban earlier in the month after an unexpected rise in malaria cases — the trend seen over the last five years had been one of decrease.

MSF supported the joint intervention in Alikadam and Thanchi, the most affected upazilas, and 6,470 people have so far received free malaria testing and the 1,693 who tested positive have benefited from free treatment (positivity ratio of 26%).

Patients were screened and treated in community health clinics and by village health workers in remote villages where there are no medical facilities. MSF nurses and doctors trained the village health workers on the malaria screening and treatment processes before they started the activities.

Severe malaria cases are referred to hospitals

"My three-year-old daughter could not eat. She was too sick. Village health workers tested her blood and then provided her with malaria drugs. These services gave us a feeling of relief and safety",



Shafique Uddin, 26 October 2014, MSF village health workers are providing free malaria screening to the population as well as treatment to the patients tested positive in Babu para in Alikadam upazila, Bandarban.

explained the mother of a patient treated by MSF in the village of Khiwaing, Alikadam upazila. "We feel happy now that we are getting good care."

Malaria can cause high fever, fatigue, headaches and vomiting; the most acute cases can lead to coma or even death if left untreated or are not treated early enough.

In the last five years the Bangladesh authorities have made progress in fulfilling their objective to eliminate the mosquito-borne infectious disease across the country by 2020, managing to notably reduce the number of cases nationwide.

"The cooperation between the Ministry of Health and other

healthcare organisations has resulted in access to malaria diagnosis and treatment being provided quickly to the population of Bandarban", says Parthesarathy Rajendran, Head of Mission of MSF in Bangladesh.

"MSF is always ready to cooperate with the local authorities to provide healthcare wherever the needs are."

MSF has been working in Bangladesh since 1985 and has responded to several emergencies in the country. For its current malaria intervention in Bandarban district, MSF has been working with other national and international organisations such as UNDP, BRAC or GRAUS, as well as with the Ministry of Health.

Health Events Policy discussion on maternal and newborn health

STAR HEALTH REPORT

Bangladesh Perinatal Society (BPS) in collaboration with MaMoni Health System Strengthening (MaMoni HSS) project supported by USAID, Saving Newborn Lives (SNL) project of Save the Children and Unicef organised a policy session on maternal and newborn health integration in pursuit of continuum of care in health service delivery system, says a press release.

Speakers said that although maternal and newborn health are inextricably linked, program efforts addressing the health of mothers and infants are often planned, managed, and delivered separately. A persistent divide between maternal and newborn health training, programmes, service delivery, monitoring, and quality improvement systems limits effectiveness to improve outcomes. They urged to integrate these critical areas of health in order to save both mothers and their babies.

Renowned paediatricians, obstetricians, policy makers, public health specialists from both government sectors and NGOs participated in the dialogue to share their experience and exchange their views.



Facebook icon, Twitter icon, /StarHealthBD

Knowing for better living

Smoking, being more than 10 kg overweight, physical inactivity and immobility can lead to the formation of **blood clots**

- Take low fat diet
- Be physically active
- Eat vegetables and fresh fruits
- Maintain healthy weight
- Consult your Doctor



In Search of Excellence

www.orionpharmabd.com

ORION Pharma Ltd. Dhaka, Bangladesh