



A farmer at the Kava inter-cropping system project in Vanuatu. PHOTO: WORLD HEALTH ORGANISATION

URGENT CALL: protecting outdoor workers from sun-related hazards

According to estimates from the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the International Labour Organisation (ILO), working outside in the sun causes nearly 1 in 3 deaths from non-melanoma skin cancer. The research released in Environment International finds that outdoor workers carry a large and increasing burden of non-melanoma skin cancer and calls for action to prevent this serious workplace hazard and the loss of workers' lives it causes.

According to the joint estimates, 1.6 billion people of working age (15 years of age or older) were exposed to solar ultraviolet radiation while working outdoors in 2019, equivalent to 28% of all working-age people. In 2019 alone, almost 19 000 people in 183 countries died from non-melanoma skin cancer due to having worked outdoors in the sun. The majority (65%) were male.

The estimates establish occupational exposure to solar ultraviolet radiation as the work-related risk factor with the third highest attributable burden of cancer deaths globally. Between 2000 and 2019, skin cancer deaths attributable to occupational exposure to sunlight almost doubled (increasing by 88% from 10 088 deaths in 2000 to 18 960 deaths in 2019).

The WHO advocates immediate action to safeguard outdoor workers from sun-related hazards. With skin cancer emerging after prolonged exposure, protection must commence at a young working age.

Governments must enact policies ensuring shade provision, adjusted work hours, education, and protective gear like sunscreen, hats, and long clothing. These measures should activate at a UV index of 3+. Raising worker awareness about solar exposure risks and early detection programmes is pivotal in reducing skin cancer cases linked to occupational sun exposure.

WORLD DIABETES DAY 2023: Empowering access

STAR HEALTH DESK

World Diabetes Day which is celebrated on 14 November every year, provides an opportunity to raise awareness of diabetes as a global public health issue and what needs to be done, collectively and individually, for better prevention, diagnosis, and management of the condition.

This World Diabetes Day, the World Health Organisation (WHO) highlighted the need for equitable access to essential care, including raising awareness of ways people with diabetes can minimise their risk of complications.

Access to quality healthcare is a fundamental human right, yet millions of people around the world still face significant barriers to accessing diabetes care. The theme for World Diabetes Day 2023, "Access to Diabetes Care," aligns with the WHO South-East Asia Region's Non-Communicable Disease (NCD) flagship.

Globally, around 422 million people have diabetes, and 1.5 million deaths are directly attributed to diabetes every year. In the WHO South-East Asia Region, more than 96 million people are estimated to have diabetes. Diabetes and its complications (blindness, kidney failure, heart attack, stroke, and lower limb amputation) bring substantial economic loss to people with diabetes and their families, as well as to health systems and national economies. This toll is manifested through direct medical expenses and the loss of work and wages. The predictions regarding the future economic burden of diabetes are as alarming as those regarding its future prevalence.

The WHO South-East Asia Region has taken several measures to address this growing health challenge in alignment with the strategies of the WHO Global Diabetes Compact. The Seventy-sixth session of the WHO Regional Committee for South-East Asia endorsed the SEAHEARTS (WHO

HEARTS package adaptation to the Southeast Asia Region) to accelerate CVD risk reduction and place 100 million people with diabetes and hypertension on protocol-based management by 2025. These interventions will enhance access to diabetes care and reinforce NCD services at the primary health care level.

Countries in the region have made commendable progress in reducing tobacco use and have taken various measures to promote physical activity, a healthy diet, and the adoption of a healthy lifestyle, which are essential for reducing the

among enrolled patients.

Improving access to care for diabetes is a priority for the region. WHO appeals to countries and stakeholders to take measures through several key avenues, which include:

- Scale efforts to reduce risk factors with a 'whole-of-society' and 'whole-of-government' approach.
- Bridge treatment gaps and enhance disease control through protocols, trained carers, and advanced technology in primary healthcare.
- Focus on timely diagnosis and management of complications,



risk of diabetes. Access to diabetes care services continues to expand in the region.

The WHO NCD Country Capacity Survey of 2021 has indicated that in most countries in the region, the essential medicines and technologies for diabetes management are 'generally available' in primary healthcare centers. Healthcare providers are being trained to prevent and manage diabetes using the WHO's technical package for diabetes, HEARTS-D, tailored to the national context. Emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence-based solutions, are being explored for the early detection of diabetes complications

especially for high-risk individuals, through updated guidelines and efficient referral systems.

- Implement information systems for longitudinal monitoring, utilise digital solutions for measuring key indicators, and invest in research for simplified self-care management.

Diabetes care must be accessible, affordable, and top-notch for all, regardless of status or location. It is a collective responsibility—governments, healthcare, and communities. Small investments now can yield significant future gains. This World Diabetes Day, let's champion the message: 'Know your risk, know your response.'

Source: World Health Organisation

HAVE A NICE DAY Dark side of human nature

DR RUBAUL MURSHED



The human being is the most brilliant social creature among all living beings. But to become truly humane, one needs to eliminate the top three emotional diseases that can eat away at happiness.

More and more people are becoming psychologically ill and feeling unhappy lately. Studies indicate that dissatisfaction with one's level of well-being has risen in the past decades due to practicing these emotions.

Although pride seems to be a self-expansive vice, it leads to self-contempt and self-pity. It is toxic for the soul, as it is the basis for disrespecting others. It is interesting that there is a group of people who subconsciously act with pride, hurting and creating suffering in other lives. But they tend to judge everything with overconfidence. It is so unfortunate that they give wise advice to others while carrying great pride within themselves. This type of hubristic pride is associated with low self-esteem, high narcissism, and a tendency to experience shame.

In reality, the touch of pride's venom eventually throws one into an ocean of shame. Side by side, ingratitude is also very dangerous because it makes us susceptible to ever-increasing levels of unbelief, which is a failure to honour the laws of nature. Ungrateful people often display a sense of entitlement, narcissism, and a greedy need for admiration.

Every unkind act is also the root of unhappiness. Lack of gratitude is the root cause of this chronic illness. Indeed, the key recipe to happiness and psychological well-being is kindness. A person who lacks gratitude is like a basket with holes. To do good to them is like pouring milk into a river. They can make one feel really unimportant and insignificant. They always seem to be more focused on themselves and their own problems.

People who exhibit pride, ingratitude, and unkindness can harm their mental health by refusing to listen and learn. These dark habits fuel an 'attitude of entitlement'. These emotions and habits can mislead us into thinking we can handle everything alone, preventing us from 'teamwork'.

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TACKLING PRETERM BIRTH challenges worldwide

DR ABDULLAHEL AMAAN & DR KHAINOOR ZAHAN

The World Health Organisation (WHO) defines preterm birth as babies born alive before 37 weeks of pregnancy are completed. According to the most recent estimates, preterm birth is the leading cause of death in children under the age of five; each year, about 15 million babies worldwide are born preterm, which is about 1 in 10 children. Many survivors face a lifetime of disabilities, including learning disabilities and visual and hearing problems.

In low-income settings, half of the babies born at or below 32 weeks (2 months early) die due to a lack of feasible, cost-effective care such as warmth, breastfeeding support, and basic care for infections and breathing difficulties. Suboptimal use of technology in middle-income settings is causing an increased burden of disability among preterm babies who survive the neonatal period.

Preventing deaths and complications from preterm birth starts with a healthy pregnancy. WHO's antenatal care guidelines include key interventions to help prevent preterm birth, such as counselling on healthy diet, optimal nutrition, and tobacco and substance use; foetal measurements, including the use of early ultrasound to help determine gestational age and detect multiple pregnancies; and

a minimum of 8 contacts with health professionals throughout pregnancy, starting before 12 weeks, to identify and manage risk factors such as infections.

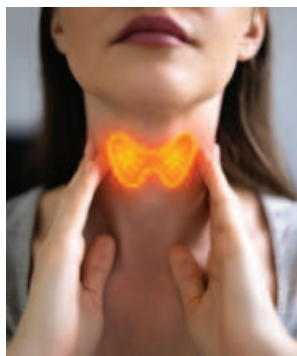
In 2022, WHO published new recommendations on the care of preterm infants. These reflect new evidence that simple interventions such as kangaroo mother care (KMC) immediately after birth, early initiation of breastfeeding, and early use of respiratory supports such as continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP) for breathing problems can substantially reduce mortality in preterm and low birthweight babies.

"World Prematurity Day" on November 17 is one of the most important days of the year to raise awareness of the challenges and burden of preterm birth globally, as well as ways to prevent it and how to give babies born too soon the best chance to survive and thrive. The global theme of World Prematurity Day 2023 is "Small actions, big impact: immediate skin-to-skin care for every baby everywhere." Skin-to-skin contact has been proven to be extremely effective for every baby, especially for premature babies.

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Can thyroid issues affect cognitive health?

Low serum thyroid-stimulating hormone (TSH), a symptom of thyroid toxicosis, can result from thyroid problems or overmedication for



hypothyroidism. Research suggests it might heighten the risk of dementia.

A study published in the Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA) tracked 66,000 individuals without prior low TSH or cognitive problems. Between 2014 and 2023, 2,700 participants had low TSH (60% due to medication). Also, 4,800 were diagnosed with cognitive disorders. At age 75, 11% with thyrotoxicosis and 6% without it developed cognitive issues; at age 85, the numbers rose to 34% and 26%, respectively.

Adjusting for various factors, any thyrotoxicosis was linked to a 39% higher risk of cognitive disorders. Specifically, severe exogenous thyrotoxicosis (TSH 0.1 mIU/L) showed the strongest association with increased risk for cognitive problems.

In essence, low TSH levels due to thyroid troubles or overmedication might raise the risk of cognitive issues, including dementia. Understanding this link can help in the earlier identification and management of these conditions.







PAEDIATRIC UROLOGY

Paediatric Urology is a medical specialty that focuses on diagnosing and treating urological conditions in children, including the urinary tract system and the male and female genitalia. The urinary tract system includes the kidneys, ureters, bladder, and urethra, while the male genitalia includes the penis, testicles, scrotum, and the female genitalia is vagina.

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