

THE ROLE OF HEALTH PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS IN THE TOBACCO CONTROL STRATEGY

INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION LEVEL

International associations have great potential to show leadership by sending a clear message to their national counterparts that tobacco control is at the top of the agenda. Many organizations have several other competing priorities and interests, but the bottom line is that tobacco is the second most important cause of preventable death and illness in the world, and unless national associations realize that their international organization is giving tobacco its due priority, the message is not disseminated further as effectively. In addition to endorsing the Code of Practice on Tobacco Control for Health Professional Organizations and adhering to its principles, international organizations can provide support to national organization efforts. They can use their communication with member mechanisms to highlight tobacco-related issues and how they pertain to their particular group, make tobacco a plenary topic in conferences, link with existing resources that have overlapping interests with their members, and visibly support the implementation of the WHO FCTC.

As mentioned previously, the code of practice was developed during the WHO informal meeting of health professional organizations and tobacco control by a group of international health professional organizations in January 2004. The following 14 points (Box 4) outline the potential role of health professional organizations in the treatment of tobacco dependence and smoking cessation and provide guidance on organizational changes and activities that can be undertaken to promote a smoke-free profession.

BOX 4 Code of practice on tobacco control for health professional organizations

Preamble: In order to contribute actively to the reduction of tobacco consumption and include tobacco control in the public health agenda at national, regional and global levels, it is hereby agreed that health professional organizations will:

1. Encourage and support their members to be role models by not using tobacco and by promoting a tobacco-free culture.
2. Assess and address the tobacco consumption patterns and tobacco-control attitudes of their members through surveys and the introduction of appropriate policies.
3. Make their own organizations' premises and events tobacco-free and encourage their members to do the same.
4. Include tobacco control in the agenda of all relevant health-related congresses and conferences.
5. Advise their members to routinely ask patients and clients about tobacco consumption and exposure to tobacco smoke, using evidence-based approaches and best practices, give advice on how to quit smoking and ensure appropriate follow-up of their cessation goals.
6. Influence health institutions and educational centres to include tobacco control in their health professionals' curricula, through continued education and other training programmes.
7. Actively participate in World No Tobacco Day every 31 May.
8. Refrain from accepting any kind of tobacco industry support—financial or otherwise—and from investing in the tobacco industry, and encourage their members to do the same.
9. Ensure that their organization has a stated policy on any commercial or other kind of relationship with partners who interact with or have interests in the tobacco industry through a declaration of interest.
10. Prohibit the sale or promotion of tobacco products on their premises, and encourage their members to do the same.
11. Actively support governments in the process leading to signature, ratification and implementation of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control.
12. Dedicate financial and/or other resources to tobacco control—including dedicating resources to the implementation of this code of practice.
13. Participate in the tobacco-control activities of health professional networks.
14. Support campaigns for tobacco-free public places.

Adopted and signed by the participants of the WHO Informal Meeting on Health Professionals and Tobacco Control; 28-30 January 2004; Geneva, Switzerland.

Source and more info: www.who.int/tobacco/codeofpractice/en/

Examples of international health professional associations with a special focus on tobacco control



Pharmacists

Since the launch of the Global Network of Pharmacists Against Tobacco in Helsinki in August 2003, the International Pharmaceutical Federation (FIP) has been involved in many new tobacco cessation initiatives. During the FIP Congress 2003 in Sydney, Australia, FIP adopted a Statement of Policy on the Role of the Pharmacist in Promoting a Tobacco Free Future. The statement includes recommendations both for pharmaceutical organizations and for individual pharmacists to help people who wish to give up smoking or other uses of tobacco, and to encourage others to do so. As a step towards the implementation of the Statement, the FIP Council agreed to make a combined effort of all FIP member organizations to mobilize pharmacists around the Tobacco Cessation. The issue was tackled through a global campaign for pharmacists launched on World No Tobacco Day on 31 May 2004. FIP produced campaign materials including the following:

- a letter from the FIP president
- an FIP Statement of Policy on the Role of the Pharmacist in Promoting a Tobacco Free Future
- a draft press release on the role of the pharmacist in tobacco cessation
- examples of FIP activities
- an announcement for the next FIP Congress in New Orleans
- examples of tobacco control activities of FIP member organizations
- a model letter to the minister of health regarding signature, ratification and implementation of the WHO FCTC
- a booklet on the WHO FCTC
- an updated status of the WHO FCTC

On the occasion of World No Tobacco Day 2004, 15 member organizations reported on their activities. In January 2004, the FIP participated in the WHO Meeting for Health Professional Organizations and tobacco control (Box 4). FIP has formally adopted this code of practice and has promoted it to their respective member organizations. A meeting of the FIP Global Network of Pharmacists Against Tobacco was held during the 64th FIP Congress in New Orleans, USA on 7 September 2004 and attended by more than 70 pharmacists from 20 countries. The meeting discussed national and local initiatives pharmacists had undertaken to offer tobacco cessation services as well as pharmacist education and training to this end. During the 64th FIP Congress, the FIP also issued a press release entitled 'FIP calls for ban on tobacco sales and smoking in pharmacies'. During the press conference, the panel pointed out that pharmacists are health professionals committed to improving the health of their customers. The elimination of tobacco products from pharmacies is an achievable tobacco control strategy that will benefit public health. To date, 322 people have subscribed to the Pharmacists Against Tobacco e-mail list and messages have been posted by pharmacists on various topics including pharmacy guidelines

on smoking cessation, training materials, events, use of nicotine replacement therapy (NRT), a ban on the sale of tobacco products in pharmacies, local campaigns and awareness-raising about the WHO FCTC. The subscribers include among others, pharmacists, other health professionals, health journalists, researchers, students and WHO employees.

Source/contact: International Pharmaceutical Federation (FIP).

Website: www.pharmacistsagainsttobacco.org

Dentists

The FDI World Dental Federation is a federation of National Dental Associations. Its primary roles are to bring together the world of dentistry, represent the global dental profession and stimulate and facilitate exchange of information across all borders with the aim of optimal oral health for all people. (<http://www.fdiworldental.org/home/home.html>)

In the area of tobacco control, the FDI World Dental Federation has advocated actively for the inclusion of dentists in the Global Health Professional Survey (GHPS), a surveillance initiative by WHO's TFI and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The aim of this survey is to study tobacco issues among various health professional groups by obtaining information from dentistry, pharmacy, as well as medical school and nursing school students. A pilot study is currently being implemented in all six WHO regions and initial results are expected by the end of May 2005. In January 2004, the FDI participated in the WHO Meeting for Health Professional Organizations and tobacco control (Box 4). The General Assembly of the FDI adopted the code of practice as an official FDI policy statement. In September 2004, during the Annual World Dental Control Congress in New Delhi, India, a full-day session was held on oral cancer and pre-cancer. Indian and international experts explored the links between oral cancer and tobacco.

Source: http://www.fdiworldental.org/public_health/4_3activities.html

Nurses

The International Council of Nurses (ICN) produces 'Nursing Matters', a series of fact sheets to provide quick reference information and international perspectives from the nursing profession on current health and social issues. The fact sheet on 'Nurses for a Tobacco-Free Life', highlights that: i) nurses are at the forefront of prevention; ii) nurses can help other nurses; and, iii) nurses can contribute to public-health policy.

Nurses are in a unique position to enhance prevention and cessation strategies since together they see millions of people every day in a variety of settings and situations. Nurses have the opportunity and competence to assess smoking status, advise on the ill-health effects of smoking, and assist in smoking cessation. It is important for nurses to understand the physical and psychological addiction of nicotine and the social role that it plays in many people's lives. Health-care professionals must provide a non-judgmental environment that fosters a positive approach in support of cessation instead of instilling guilt or blaming the patient. ICN further urges nurses around the world to be in the forefront of tobacco

control. Nurses and nursing associations can help one another in their own tobacco battles. An ICN survey currently in progress reveals that the majority of National Nursing Associations do not provide training in cessation methods for professionals who smoke. Nurses should develop partnerships with a broad range of other professional groups, women's and youth associations, the media, schools, government and others committed to a tobacco-free lifestyle. In January 2004, the International Council of Nurses (ICN) participated in the WHO Meeting for Health Professional Organizations and Tobacco control (Box 4). In March 2004, the ICN endorsed the code of practice on tobacco control for health professional organizations and disseminated the code to all national nurse associations worldwide, urging them to implement it.

Source: http://www.icn.ch/matters_tabacco_print.htm

Physicians

As an organization promoting the highest possible standards of medical ethics, the World Medical Association (WMA) provides ethical guidance to physicians through its declarations, resolutions and statements. These documents also help to guide national medical associations, governments and international organizations throughout the world. In September 1988, the 40th World Medical Assembly (Vienna, Austria) adopted the WMA Statement on Health Hazards of Tobacco Products. The statement was amended by the 49th WMA General Assembly in Hamburg, Germany in November 1997. If they have not taken appropriate action already, the WMA urges the National Medical Associations and all physicians to take the following actions to help reduce the health hazards related to smoking and to other use of tobacco products: i) Adopt a policy position opposing smoking and the use of tobacco products, and publicize the policy so adopted; ii) Prohibit smoking at all business, social, and ceremonial meetings of the National Medical Association, in line with the decision of the World Medical Association to impose a similar ban at all its own such meetings; iii) Develop, support and participate in programmes to educate the profession and the public as to the health hazards of tobacco products. Educational programmes directed specifically at children and young adults to avoid the use of tobacco products are particularly important. Programmes for non-smokers and non-users of smokeless tobacco products aimed at avoidance are as necessary as education aimed at convincing smokers to cease the use of tobacco products; iv) Encourage individual physicians to be role models (by not using tobacco products) and spokesmen for the campaign to educate the public about the deleterious effects on health resulting from the use of tobacco products. Ask all hospitals and health facilities to prohibit smoking on their premises; v) Refrain from accepting any funding from the tobacco industry, and to urge medical schools, research institutions and individual researchers to do the same, in order to avoid giving any credibility to that industry. vi) Advocate the enactment and enforcement of laws that: a) require warning about health hazards to be printed on all packages in which tobacco products are sold and in all advertising and promotional materials for tobacco products; b) limit smoking in public buildings, commercial airlines, schools, hospitals, clinics and other health facilities; c) impose limitations on advertising and sales promotion of tobacco products; d) ban all advertising and sales promotion of tobacco products, except at the point of sale; e) prohibit the sales of cigarettes and other tobacco products to children and adolescents; f) prohibit smoking on all commercial airline flights within national borders and on all international commercial airline flights, and prohibit the sale of tax-free tobacco products at airports; g) prohibit all government subsidies for tobacco and tobacco products; h) provide for research into the prevalence of tobacco product use and the effect of tobacco products on the population's health status,

and develop educational programmes for the public on the health hazards of tobacco use; i) prohibit the promotion, distribution and sale of any new forms of tobacco products that are not currently available; and, j) increase taxation of tobacco products, using the increased revenues for health-care measures. The WMA regularly issues press releases on the importance of tobacco control.

Source: <http://www.wma.net/>

Other health professional alliances

Since its foundation in 1999, the World Health Professional Alliance (WHPA) has already achieved a number of important milestones, including an active role in the anti-tobacco initiative. Joined by the International Dental Federation (FDI) and the World Confederation for Physical Therapy (WCPT), the WHPA unites efforts in the war against tobacco use to actively work for a tobacco-free world. The WHPA encourages governments to: develop policies that ban tobacco advertising and promotion; require prominent and significant tobacco warnings on all tobacco products; ban smoking in public places and commercial airline flights, provide public education campaigns against tobacco use, and encourage tobacco farmers to shift to crop substitution. On the occasion of WNTD 1999, the WHPA issued a joint statement urging national health professional associations: i) to unite their efforts in the war against tobacco use, and to actively work for a tobacco-free world; ii) to coordinate efforts with other national anti-smoking groups to bring the harmful effects of tobacco to the attention of their governments and encourage them to reduce, discourage and eradicate tobacco use; iii) to encourage their governments to develop policies that ban tobacco advertising and promotion; require prominent and significant tobacco warnings on all tobacco products; ban smoking in public places and commercial airline flights, provide public education campaigns against tobacco use, and encourage tobacco farmers to shift to crop substitution. Moreover, the statement urged individual health professionals to: i) ban smoking within their premises and at all meetings and conferences of the national associations; ii) promote smoke-free hospitals and other health facilities; iii) develop programmes to educate the health professionals and the public on the health hazards of tobacco use; iv) encourage health professionals to be living examples of a tobacco-free lifestyle, and to be champions for this cause; v) lobby for increased taxation on tobacco products and to use the revenue for health care; and, distance themselves and their professional associations from the tobacco industry.

Source: <http://www.whpa.org/whpa.htm>