

The Oxford Health Alliance

A recent World Health Organisation report, *Preventing Chronic Disease: A Vital Investment*, confirms what many have known: An estimated 388 million people will die from chronic disease worldwide over the next 10 years. Of these, 36 million premature deaths could be prevented by an additional 2% fall in chronic disease each year. This can be achieved – by addressing three major risk factors: tobacco use, poor diet and lack of physical activity.

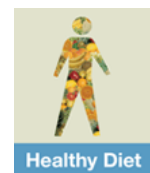
Chronic disease: a global call to action

Failure to take action now will lead to a full-blown catastrophe, particularly in the developing world, where health-care systems are unable to cope with increasing demand. Cardiovascular disease (CVD) has already become the leading cause of death in some developing countries, and by 2020 70% of the 10 million deaths due to tobacco each year will occur outside the developed world.

The **Oxford Health Alliance** confronts the epidemic of chronic disease. OxHA is about *preventing and reducing the global impact of chronic disease. It stands for innovative action with diverse stakeholders around three risk factors – tobacco use, physical activity and diet.*

www.oxha.org

Over half of the deaths in the world today are due to four chronic diseases – type 2 diabetes, CVD, chronic lung diseases and some cancers – which are caused by three risk factors: tobacco use, poor diet and lack of physical activity.



What OxHA does

The Oxford Health Alliance enables collaboration between experts and activists from a wide range of disciplines in order to raise awareness and change behaviours, policies and perspectives about the epidemic of chronic disease at every level of society. OxHA advocates and facilitates action and collaboration and encourages research about the risk factors and chronic disease prevention to promote health at local, national and international levels.

OxHA takes a holistic approach to primary prevention – it is not enough to treat patients once diseases manifest themselves, nor is it sufficient to educate people of the dangers of unhealthy lifestyles. Multiple stakeholders must be mobilised to ensure that the environment in which we all live is more conducive to chronic disease prevention and that individuals are empowered to make healthy choices.

OxHA takes a three-fold approach:

- Identify **the right people**, the influencers, without whom action is impossible. These include health professionals, young people, world-leading academics, activists, government representatives, non-governmental organisations and corporate executives.
- Provide a **neutral forum** for tackling the hard problems, ensuring that all viewpoints are heard, understood and respected.
- Foster a **collaborative approach** to solve problems with new thinking rather than perpetuating problems.

Six central areas of focus

OxHA focuses on six **topics central to the prevention of chronic disease and reducing the risk factors**. OxHA's work in these areas promotes translating compelling evidence into practical and actionable solutions. OxHA assembles and promotes evidence in each area, in conjunction with a network of experts and partner organisations.



The economic argument for prevention: the costs of chronic disease are already vast, and without urgent action these costs will continue to increase.



Prevention in the workplace: chronic disease risk reduction in the workplace can have a major impact on the health of employees and their families, while also demonstrating social responsibility and improving productivity.



Youth, children and future health: the insights and enthusiasm of young people can change perceptions and lifestyles of future generations.



Environmental design for prevention: architects, urban planners and transport engineers (among many others) can create environments in which healthy choices are easy choices.



Industry's role in prevention: prevention efforts by companies and industries can have a far-reaching effect on consumers and communities.



Law & health: exploring the relatively untapped potential for the law and health policy to interact to modify chronic diseases determinants that are generated in the way we live.

3FOUR50.com

OxHA's 3FOUR50.com website aims to harness the social networking power of the internet to promote chronic disease prevention. 3FOUR50.com reflects OxHA's message of **3** risk factors leading to **four** chronic diseases contributing to more than **50%** of deaths worldwide.

3FOUR50 unites activists and enthusiasts committed to preventing the epidemic of chronic disease and raising awareness about its devastating consequences. It provides a platform for members to showcase their work and work together on new projects, and highlights best practice in the area of prevention. Key features are the Network channel that allows members to contact one another; weekly video news; blogs, photos and interviews.



Major initiatives

- **Community Interventions for Health:** this major research initiative across several countries (including India, China and Mexico) will develop a global network of prevention and research sites and evaluate successful community-based interventions that can be replicated in other parts of the world.
- **Grand Challenges:** launched in November 2007 in *Nature*, this Delphi process established crucial knowledge gaps and research initiatives required for prevention of chronic diseases.
- **Fit City:** online competition held in late 2007 for young people to submit their ideas around what makes a healthy (or unhealthy) city.
- **Oxford Dialogues:** topical meetings that confront pressing topics with influential stakeholders. Past Dialogues include 'Patients' rights in Europe' and 'Law and health policy'.
- **Publications:** monographs on central topics and articles in various publications. In 2006, a major paper on the economic case for prevention was published.

Annual summits

OxHA convenes its members at annual summits to generate ideas, provoke dialogue and stimulate effective action. The first two meetings, held at the University of Oxford in 2003 and 2004, underscored the need for a truly global approach to the challenges of chronic disease, and the third meeting, in Yale, saw the start of OxHA's 'transition to action'. The 2006 meeting was held in Cape Town, South Africa on the theme of 'Health in transition: working together', and included the launch of 3four50.com, on which the event was streamed live and on demand. The 2008 summit was on the theme of 'Building a healthy future: chronic disease and our environment'. It was held in Sydney, Australia, in February 2008, and saw the launch of the 'Sydney Resolution', a call to action to promote innovative and effective ways to build a healthier environment and prevent chronic disease.



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