



**GLOBAL
ALLIANCE
FOR CHRONIC
DISEASE**

Secretariat 1st Floor
28 Margaret Street

London
W1W 8RZ
United Kingdom

Tel: +44 (0) 20 7637 4330
Fax: +44 (0) 20 7637 4336

www.gafcd.org

Six of the World's Foremost Health Research Agencies Form Alliance to Curb Humanity's Most Fatal Diseases

*Top Agencies Ally to Set Common Priorities
to Reduce Rising Toll of "Chronic Non-Communicable Diseases"*

Seattle, WA, USA – Six of the world's foremost health agencies, collectively managing an estimated 80% of all public health research funding, today announced the formation of a landmark alliance to collaborate in the critical battle against chronic, non-communicable diseases: cardiovascular diseases (mainly heart disease and stroke), several cancers, chronic respiratory conditions, and type 2 diabetes.

The health impact and socioeconomic cost of these largely-preventable diseases is enormous and rising, potentially derailing efforts at poverty reduction.

The Global Alliance for Chronic Diseases (Alliance) is being created to support clear priorities for a coordinated research effort that will address this growing health crisis, now reaching world epidemic proportions. Experts estimate that, unless action is stepped up, 388 million people worldwide will die of one or more such diseases within the next decade.

Work of the Alliance will focus in particular on the needs of low and middle income countries, and on those of low income populations of more developed countries.

The Alliance's charter members are:

- Australia's National Health Medical Research Council;
- Canadian Institutes of Health Research;
- China's Ministry of Health in association with the Chinese Academy of Medical Sciences;
- The UK Medical Research Council; and
- The US National Institutes of Health, specifically its National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI), and the Fogarty International Center.

The Indian Council of Medical Research, New Delhi, will be invited to join the Alliance as a member. Research agencies from other countries and private funders may be invited to join in a second wave.

The World Health Organization (WHO) is joining the Alliance as an observer to facilitate Alliance support for implementation of the World Health Assembly-approved "Action Plan for the Global Strategy for Prevention and Control of Non-communicable Diseases"
(www.who.int/entity/nmh/NCD%20Action%20Plan%20Resolution.pdf)

The following research priorities have been proposed by some founding Alliance members, for discussion at their inaugural scientific meetings in November:

- test ways to prevent cardiovascular diseases and complications of diabetes;
- identify and promote public health measures for controlling obesity;
- characterize and quantify the major risk factors for chronic obstructive airways disease (both tobacco and environmental pollution) and the development of control measures;
- advance research into the problem of tobacco consumption and its relationship to cancer, cardiovascular disease and other disorders;
- develop interventions to address the above priorities.

The proposed priorities were identified in a collaborative paper, “Grand Challenges in Chronic Non-Communicable Diseases,” published in the journal Nature (Vol 450|22, Nov. 2007). Based on a global Delphi survey, this widely-cited research paper has been acknowledged as a sound, systematic framework for reaching practical policy solutions to the prevention and treatment of humanity’s most common chronic diseases.

Setting research priorities for non-communicable disease prevention will be closely coordinated with WHO.

A future Alliance research priority is likely to be in the area of mental health.

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Quotable quotes

Elizabeth G. Nabel, MD, Director, NHLBI

“One of the most promising outcomes of this collaboration is the opportunity to translate research findings into sustainable solutions. For example, we know about preventing heart attacks and strokes associated with smoking or high blood pressure, but how should we best put these ideas into practice, especially in low-resource settings or on a large scale?”

“We look forward to working together to find solutions to diseases that have so stubbornly defied reduction and to learn from innovations in low and middle income countries, such as community interventions and/or rearranging health care delivery in the most cost-effective way.”

Ala Alwan, MD, Assistant Director General for Noncommunicable Diseases and Mental Health, World Health Organization

“The World Health Organization hopes that this new initiative will assist with the implementation of the Global Strategy Action Plan. Prevention and implementation research will be critical to reducing the enormous health and socioeconomic burden of non-communicable diseases (NCD), particularly in low- and middle-income countries. It is crucial to have close coordination between this initiative and the work underway in WHO to develop a prioritized research agenda focusing on strengthening prevention interventions and promoting national capacity in NCD prevention research.”

Sir Leszek Borysiewicz, Chief Executive, UK Medical Research Council

“It is essential that we work in close partnership with colleagues from developed and developing countries to address the challenges posed by the world-wide increase in non-communicable

diseases. We welcome this opportunity for the UK to establish global links in this vital area of research and look forward to the future expansion of the partnership.”

Alain Beaudet, President of the Canadian Institutes of Health Research

“Canada is proud to collaborate with other countries in the fight against these chronic diseases. I believe that Canada can excel on the world stage by bringing our unique research talents to bear on these global health research problems that affect millions of people worldwide.”

Sir John Bell, Regius Professor, Oxford University; President, UK Academy of Medical Science

“This is the first research funding alliance on chronic diseases that we have seen. It has been due for a long time and I hope that it will grow fast so we can begin to break the rising curve of these diseases globally.”

Stig Pramming, Director, Oxford Health Alliance

“Industry has an important role in helping to solve some of these problems and the Alliance intends to work with the commercial sector as appropriate.”

Abdallah Daar, McLaughlin-Rotman Centre for Global Health, based at the University of Toronto and the University Health Network

“We anticipate that the initial group of Alliance members will expand rapidly, embracing research funders, including philanthropic foundations, from around the world that have an interest in this agenda.”

David Matthews, Oxford Health Alliance, and Professor of Diabetes, University of Oxford

“This is a significant leap forward in a continuing programme to get adequate resource focused on the huge problem of the epidemic of chronic disease. Better research and an outcome-orientated strategy will have a substantial impact on reducing the burden of human misery.”

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Background

In their 2007 paper in *Nature*, the 19 authors of the “Grand Challenges”, led by Dr. Daar (working with the Oxford Health Alliance) said chronic non-communicable diseases:

- cause the greatest share of death and disability worldwide;
- account for over 60% of deaths worldwide, four-fifths of those fatalities being citizens of low and middle income countries;
- cause twice as many deaths as the combined total of HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria, maternal and peri-natal conditions, and nutritional deficiencies.

As well, in the absence of serious action taken now, it is estimated that China, India and the UK will lose an estimated \$558 billion, \$237 billion and \$33 billion respectively in foregone national income over the next decade due to heart disease, stroke and diabetes.

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Media contacts at member institutions:

National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI) of the US National Institutes of Health:
+1-301-496-4236; nhlbi_news@nhlbi.nih.gov

Canadian Institutes of Health Research
+1-613-941-4563; +1-613-808-7526 (m); mediarelations@cihr-irsc.gc.ca

UK Medical Research Council
Ms. Hazel Lambert, +44-(0)-207-670 5301; +44 (0) 20 7637 6011;
press.office@headoffice.mrc.ac.uk