

**The Oxford  
Health Alliance**



**Confronting** the Epidemic of Chronic Disease



## The Oxford Health Alliance

We now know that **prevention** of unhealthy behaviours in regard to diet, exercise and tobacco consumption is critical in confronting the rapidly growing epidemic of chronic disease. These illnesses rob individuals of healthy years of life and have the potential to devastate whole societies and undermine prospects for a stable and secure future. Broad-based preventive efforts must be launched **now**, while there is still time.

The Oxford Health Alliance enables experts and activists from different backgrounds to **collaborate** effectively to raise awareness and change behaviours, policies and perspectives at every level of society. The first goal is to focus attention among influencers and educate critical decision makers in order to generate a sense of urgency about the cause and **promote prevention**.

Alliance members from around the world include leading academics, teachers and researchers, as well as activists and corporate executives, patient's rights advocates, physicians, nurses and others. These individuals share a sense of urgency about the worldwide explosion of chronic disease and a commitment to immediate and sustained action to promote health and prevent disease.



Who We Are



What We Do

The Alliance originated in dialogues focused on the future and on the conviction that unless we act now, the epidemic of chronic disease will become catastrophic, exacting a terrible and avoidable toll.

We chose to act.

The Alliance is focused on the **3** risk factors for the **4** chronic diseases that cause **50** percent of deaths



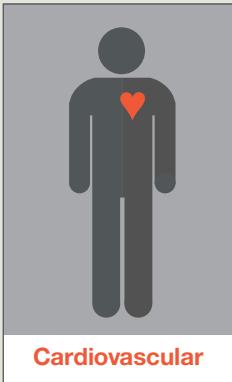
Tobacco



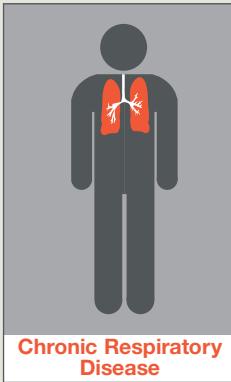
Poor Diet



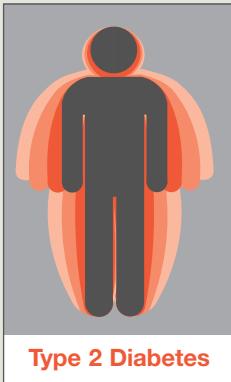
Lack of Exercise



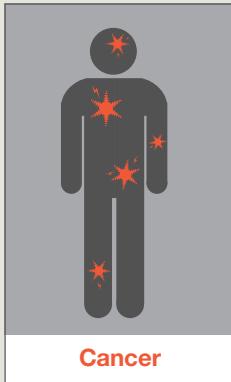
Cardiovascular



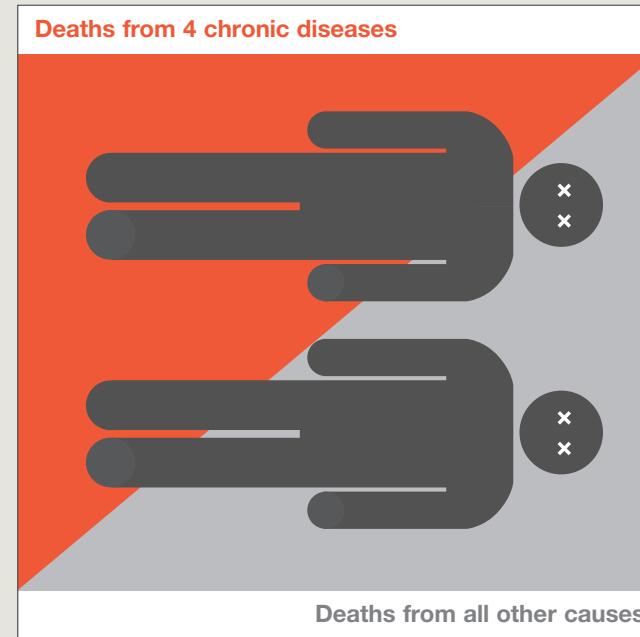
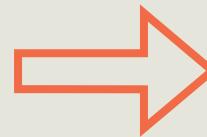
Chronic Respiratory Disease



Type 2 Diabetes

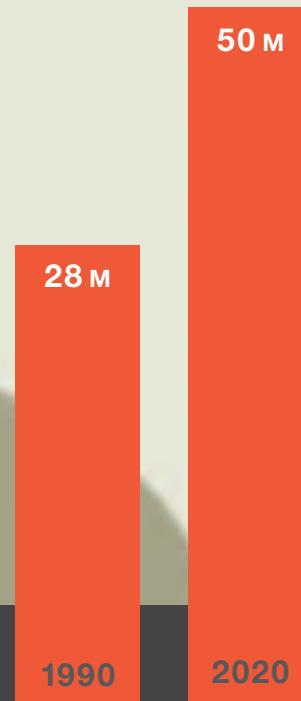


Cancer



# Too little is being done to prevent an under-publicised epidemic

Chronic diseases are growing unchecked



Predicted rise of annual global mortality from chronic disease.

Source: World Health Organization, 2004

Increasing among the richest in poor countries  
and among the poorest in rich countries

As globalisation drives new patterns of consumption into the developing world, chronic disease rates soar among those segments of society best able to afford a western lifestyle. In the developed world, a disproportionate burden falls on the least advantaged.



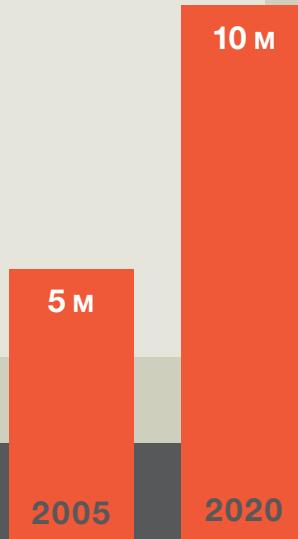
Projected number of people with diabetes by 2020.

Source: IDF Diabetes Atlas, 2005

# The situation today is serious: the prospect for tomorrow is truly disastrous



Tobacco is already the second major cause of death in the world, accounting for the death of one in ten adults. Use is growing, particularly among the young in developing countries. Half the people that smoke today are expected to die as a result.



Annual deaths from tobacco are on track to *double* by 2020.

Source: World Health Organization website, 2005

Today chronic disease causes terrible suffering to **individuals**,  
the loss of healthy years for their **families**  
and an increasingly unbearable burden for **society**.



This emergent global crisis can and must be averted.

“We haven’t seen a problem like this since the big epidemics that swept through Western civilisations in the 14th Century and before.”

Professor John Bell, *Regius Professor of Medicine, University of Oxford*

# Prevention Works



The beneficial effects of these lifestyle changes are well understood and the tobacco cessation movement has demonstrated the effectiveness of various strategies for making healthy choices the easier choices. It is the translation of this knowledge into action that has been the issue and we have now reached a point where there is no more time to waste.

It is now urgently important to change mindsets, policies and behaviours and implement strategies that support prevention at every level of society. Unless we do, the burden of chronic disease is likely to overwhelm even wealthy societies and undermine the hard-won gains in the world's developing regions.

The cost of treating the diseases that result from the known risk factors is argument alone for immediate and broad-based preventive action. The realisation that it is within our power to avoid enormous human suffering and loss of life is even more compelling.

Future generations will surely hold us accountable if we stand by passively, knowing what we can and should be doing to safeguard the future.

The Oxford Health Alliance convenes an annual meeting to generate ideas, provoke dialogue and formulate action. The first two meetings, held at The University of Oxford, underscored the need for a truly global approach to the challenge of chronic disease. One consequence was the decision to hold future meetings in other locations, with the 2005 summit at Yale University in the United States, and plans for subsequent meetings in South Africa and Australia, respectively.

The group is also engaged in addressing the critical issue of evidence by working to gather, distill and effectively present data to support the case for immediate action, provide a solid basis for sensible decision making and hasten a shift in thinking at the highest levels of business, government and society.

Community-based demonstration projects, such as the Community Actions to Prevent Chronic Diseases programme (CAPCoD), are being supported as a means of encouraging implementation of local strategies and providing scalable models for others to follow in the future.

Alliance members are initiating a Delphi process among leading global experts and scientists to define major gaps in the knowledge about prevention of chronic diseases that are obstacles to progress.

The Alliance recognises that a concerted effort to create change involves participants from every level of society, and is committed to 'influencing influencers' as an effective and practicable means of catalysing broad-based action.

