



World Health Organization

The World Health Report

2003

Shaping the Future

The World Health Report 2003: Shaping the Future predicts that major global health improvements will be achieved in the next few years. Dr Jong-Wook Lee, Director-General of WHO, describes WHO's ambition "to help all people, but especially the poorest among them, to shape a better future". The report advocates a new drive for equitable health improvement as a vital part of global efforts for justice and security.

Drawing on lessons of the past, in particular the Health for All movement that was launched 25 years ago, this year's report focuses on the major health gains that are possible in the coming years and shows how WHO and the global health community can achieve these objectives.

Against a backdrop of the ambitious targets of the Millennium Development Goals, *The World Health Report 2003* presents a comprehensive vision encompassing an analysis of today's major health challenges and an action programme for global health improvement. The section on infections singles out for special attention HIV/AIDS, poliomyelitis – whose elimination is within reach – and new infections illustrated by SARS. Another important section deals with the health of women and children.

The focus of the noncommunicable diseases section is on cardiovascular diseases, injuries and the continuing work on tobacco control.

In order to achieve the health improvements that are within their grasp, countries need well-functioning health systems. The report shows how systems can be strengthened, combining both primary care facilities and higher-level services linked by an efficient and integrated referral network. In this, as in all its work, WHO renews its commitment to working with countries in responding to national and local health challenges.

"We have a real opportunity now to make progress that will mean longer, healthier lives for millions of people."

"Sustained effort, increased resource commitments and intensified collaboration among partners will be required."

— Dr LEE Jong-wook,
Director-General, WHO

2003, 140 pages [E, F, S]
ISBN 92 4 156243 9
Swiss francs 15. – /US \$13.50
In developing countries: Sw.fr. 10.50
Order no. 1242003

“WHO is now making results in countries its main objective. Effective action to improve population health is possible in every country but it takes local knowledge and strength to turn that possibility into reality...”

— Dr LEE Jong-wook,
Director-General, WHO

Leading causes of mortality among adults ages 15-59

1. HIV/AIDS
2. Ischaemic heart disease
3. Tuberculosis
4. Road traffic injuries
5. Cerebrovascular disease
6. Self-inflicted injuries
7. Violence
8. Cirrhosis of the liver
9. Lower respiratory infections
10. Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease

Excerpts from the report...

- *Today's global health situation raises urgent questions about justice. In some parts of the world there is a continued expectation of longer and more comfortable life, while in many others there is despair over the failure to control disease although the means to do so exist.*
- *Global health is a study in contrasts. While a baby girl born in Japan today can expect to live for about 85 years, a girl born at the same moment in Sierra Leone has a life expectancy of 36 years.*
- *A world marked by such inequities is in very serious trouble. We have to find ways to unite our strengths as a global community to shape a healthier future.*
- *In most countries, there will be only small and short-lived advances towards acceptable standards of health without the development of health care systems which are strong enough to respond to current challenges.*
- *Of the more than 10 million children under 5 years old who die every year, almost all are in developing countries.*
- *Only 5% of those in the developing world who require antiretrovirals are getting them. Goals for the coming years include providing three million people in developing countries with combination antiretroviral therapy by the end of 2005. The days of a “business as usual” approach to AIDS are over.*
- *In developed countries, heart disease and stroke are the leading causes of death for adult men and women. However, in some developing countries they have also become the leading causes of death and were responsible for over 10 million deaths in 2001.*
- *Approximately 1.2 million people died of lung cancer in 2000, an increase of nearly 30% since 1990. Tobacco-related diseases are the world's leading preventable cause of death, responsible for about 5 million deaths a year.*
- *The outbreak of severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) which spread to 30 countries in 2003 produced a total of 8422 probable cases and 916 deaths by early August. Its rapid containment is one of the success stories of public health in recent years and represents a major victory for public health collaboration.*
- *A key message of this report is that real progress in health depends vitally on stronger health systems based on primary health care.*

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