News

Public health round-up

Tracking progress on NCDs

WHO’s Executive Board will consider a “global monitoring framework” – a new mechanism designed to track progress in the prevention and control of noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) at its meeting this month.

WHO Member States agreed on nine voluntary global targets and 25 indicators for heart disease, diabetes, cancer, chronic lung disease and other NCDs in November as part of the global monitoring framework. One of the targets – a 25% reduction in premature mortality caused by NCDs by 2025 – was adopted by the World Health Assembly in May 2012.

The Executive Board will also consider a draft Global Action Plan 2013–2020 for the prevention and control of NCDs. If adopted, both the monitoring mechanism and the action plan will go to the World Health Assembly in May for further consideration and approval.

The idea of the monitoring mechanism is to track the progress countries are making in two key areas: one, the reduction of illness and death due to major NCDs, such as heart disease, stroke, diabetes, cancer and chronic lung disease and, two, the exposure to key risk factors, such as tobacco use, harmful use of alcohol, unhealthy diet and physical inactivity. In addition, it would track the way countries’ national health systems are responding to the need to prevent and control NCDs. WHO was asked to develop the global monitoring framework by the UN High-level Meeting on the Prevention and Control of NCDs in September 2011.

Global disease burden update

Fewer children are dying every year, but more young- and middle-aged adults are dying and suffering from disease and injury. Noncommunicable diseases, such as cancer and heart disease, have become the dominant causes of death and disability worldwide, according to a new report.

Neglected diseases R&D

Funding of research and development (R&D) to come up with new products for neglected diseases has increased steadily over the last five years, despite the global financial crisis, according to the G-FINDER survey.

Some 204 organizations surveyed for the fifth instalment of the report, including all the major public, private and philanthropic funders, said they had provided a total of US$ 3,045 million in funds for neglected disease R&D in 2011, according to the survey report entitled, Neglected disease research and development: a five-year review.

Research group Policy Cures has been funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to survey as many top funding organizations as possible annually from 2007 to 2011 and to produce the survey. Each year a different number of organizations have been surveyed.

Some 170 organizations surveyed for each of these five years have reported an increase in their funding of neglected disease R&D of US$ 443.7 million, from US$ 2,459 million in 2007 to US$ 2,902 million in 2011.

The G-FINDER survey covers 31 diseases, including malaria, tuberculosis, HIV infection, pneumonia, sleeping sickness and helminth (worm) infections, and 134 product areas, including drugs, vaccines, diagnostics, microbicides and...
UN appeal for displaced Congolese

Internally displaced people living in North Kivu province of the Democratic Republic of the Congo fetch water on the shores of Lake Kivu. An estimated 2.4 million people have fled violence between armed groups, rebels and the national army in the crisis that started more than 10 years ago. The United Nations launched an appeal for US$ 39.5 million in November to address their health needs.