WHO global action plan on physical activity 2018 - 2030

Agita Mundo Network Response

In addition to the outstanding “zero-draft” for WHO global action plan on physical activity 2018-2030 (WHO paper version dated 1 August 2017), shared for informal consultation, the AGITA MUNDO NETWORK would like to recommend the inclusion of the topics listed below. The suggestions are pedagogically organized by each one of the four strategic objectives pointed out in “zero-draft” document.

I - STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE I: CREATING AN ACTIVE SOCIETY

1 - The new action plan should highlight a clear message about PA recommendations and sitting time reduction addressed to the public. The general public still need clear advice on how to overcome sedentary behaviour, reduce or breakup sitting time, to improve overall levels of physical activity.

2 - The new action plan should provide a clear message concerning the construct of “physical activity”; that every movement counts, and that “you don’t need to perform a sport to be active”. So, it is much more than a definition of physical activity that is needed, but recognition of the many domains, including transport, leisure, work, sport, and everyday activities.

Rationale: After analyzing the 8 important basic documents published since 2002 and those shown in the webinar, we consider that the new document must state the PA recommendation on a clear and objective way. Our consultation concluded that the lack of uniformity of message (i.e. 30min/day vs 150 min/week or most days of the week vs every day) may contribute, at least in part, to the lack of a clear understanding, and thereby “translation” of these documents. Also, the experience of Agita Mundo members on promoting PA at the community level shows that there is still a lack of understanding regarding the broader context of physical activity (and all its domains) by the general public, in some countries. Furthermore, the health benefits of physical activity, across all domains, is not yet fully appreciated by all member states.

3 - The new action plan should include the idea that being active is not only a matter of individual choice, but that opportunities to be physically active can be considered a basic human and/or civil right.

Rationale: To build an active society every citizen must be aware that he/she has the right to be physically active. This social empowerment is a necessary background for a social mobilization toward a society that values PA as a civil right and, by consequence, would foster governments and the private sector to create more opportunities and safety conditions for it.

4 - The new action plan should encourage programs to create a “Name”, a Slogan, a Logo, and a Mascot, to increase the visibility of their activities to promote physical activity. Importantly, they should be culturally relevant and socially inclusive.

Rationale: The Agita São Paulo / Agita Mundo experience has shown that this
“brand” identity facilitates the creation of a link between the scientific evidence and the communities, which is essential for creating an active society. Recognisable program names, slogans, logos and mascots improve the “notion of belonging”, what may improve the program adherence and reach.

II - STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE II: CREATING ACTIVE ENVIRONMENTS

1 - The new action plan wording should be addressed not only to health authorities, but include specific statements addressed to authorities from transportation, environment, education and public safety sectors;

2 - The new action plan should make active transportation a priority among any traffic / transport / environmental program;

3 - The new action plan should emphasise the co-benefits of active commuting; including its economic benefits, and reducing the carbon footprint (“green agenda”);

4 - The new action plan should propose that health insurance plans give economic benefits for people to be active, such as creating a network of local or regional physical activity and sports facilities with reduced prices or giving discounts on the insurance fees for physically active members.

Rationale: Considering that we live in a economically-oriented world and that the direct economic benefits of the promoting physical activity for health may be difficult to demonstrate in the short term, compared to pharmacological industry, we must build a strong a clear link with the traffic / transport and environmental sectors. This may strengthen advocacy for physical activity, due to the direct economic impact in these areas. Also, due to the strong tendency for health insurance costs to increase, an economic incentives in health insurance benefits may have a positive impact on physical activity participation and reach.

III - STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE III: CREATING ACTIVE LIVES

1 - The new action plan should pay particular attention to Social Mobilization by wording the document not only to health authorities, but to the general population.

2 - The new action plan should overcome the quantitative physical activity paradigm and incorporate the new paradigm that understands physical activity as an inherent part of daily living. The plan should highlight that even light physical activity can be part of a feasible strategy to promote active living.

Rationale: To be more effective, documents must consider both the advocacy directed toward public authorities and leaders, but also to offer a clear message to members of the public, across the life course, irrespective of income, culture, religion, gender or level of ability. It means, to formulate a message to those whose behaviour we seek to change, toward a more active life. As in any marketing strategy, each individual around the world, where they live, work, play and move from place to place, should feel that the document (or at least part of it) was written directly for him/her, his/her
family or community.

Of note, significant health benefits occur, even when individuals shift from inactivity to low physical activity levels, even though this may be below PA recommendations. The focus on light physical activity may help to incorporate a social context and values (e.g. leisure PA, how, when, why, where, and with whom PA is accumulated). The co-benefits might also positively impact on other major public health problems, such as heavy traffic, air pollution and global warming. So, even light physical activity may have a role to play in improving overall population health.

IV - STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE IV: CREATING ACTIVE SYSTEMS

1 - The new action plan should stimulate international funding for PA research and program implementation, particularly in low to middle income countries;

2 - WHO to consider the creation an own funding for PA research and the evaluation of program implementation in low to middle income countries.

Rationale: Due to the international economic crisis, that has a huge impact on government budgets allocated to prevention programs, it’s important to WHO to advocate for specific funding, and to direct seed funding or proof-of-concept funding for low and middle income countries.

3 - The use of the so-called “Two-Hats” approach, in which one hand would hold the Governmental Sector, and the other hand the Non-Governmental Sector and the Private Sector.

Rationale: This model is particularly important to the majority of the countries of the planet (and not only the more wealthy ones), where governments do not enjoy the uncritical support of all of their citizens, and thereby may reduce the legitimacy of a call for action.

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