

United Nations focus on non-communicable diseases

The UN General Assembly has held a 2-day summit with heads of government on non-communicable diseases, the first health issue on the UN agenda since HIV/AIDS in 2001.

The European Society of Cardiology, through the European Chronic Disease Alliance, has urged European heads of state 'to show leadership' and long-term commitment to the prevention of chronic non-communicable diseases at this high level meeting.

This will be the first time ever that the UN has sought 'action-orientated' commitments from governments and international organizations on the prevention and control of lifestyle-related diseases, and only the second time – following its declaration on HIV/AIDS in 2001 – that a health issue has attracted such high governmental attention. Measures to prevent non-com-

municable diseases, says the UN, have the potential to save 'millions of lives' and 'untold suffering'.

The draft declaration which the General Assembly discussed made concrete commitments on access to effective medicines, the control of tobacco, the elimination of industrially produced trans-fats in foods, and the implementation of

Professor Simon Capewell, Professor of Clinical Epidemiology at the University of Liverpool, Liverpool



measures to reduce consumption of dietary salt, sugars and saturated fats, and to increase levels of physical activity in all populations.

Agreement on all of these measures, says European Society of Cardiology spokesman Simon Capewell, Professor of Clinical Epidemiology at the University of Liverpool, UK, would be a major step forward in the prevention of cardiovascular and other non-communicable diseases.

'Indeed,' Professor Capewell notes, 'the fact that they are even being discussed by the UN and endorsed by heads of state will give the whole question of prevention the importance it deserves. So far, although there has been great progress in some countries and in some areas of prevention, the global burden imposed by non-communicable diseases is still overwhelming. This is unacceptable and totally unnecessary.'

Oral prevention of venous thromboembolism after hip or knee replacement

Apixaban, an oral treatment, is now available in the UK for the prevention of venous thromboembolic events in adult patients who have undergone elective total hip or knee replacement surgery.

Up to 27 million people living with undiagnosed dementia worldwide

Three-quarters of the estimated 36 million people with dementia worldwide do not have a formal diagnosis, according to the World Alzheimer Report 2011 (www.alz.co.uk/research/world-report-2011). Commissioned by Alzheimer's Disease International, the report estimates that early diagnosis could save up to US\$10 000 per person by reducing care costs.

Single dose, once-daily tablet for adults with type 2 diabetes

Linagliptin (Trajenta) is a single dose (5 mg), once-daily tablet for the treatment of adults with type 2 diabetes mellitus. It is the first treatment in this class licensed for use in type 2 diabetes mellitus irrespective of the degree of renal impairment.

Arthritis and joint pain more frequent in women aged 85 years and older than men, finds cohort study

Research carried out by Newcastle University (Duncan et al, 2011) has found that the lifetime prevalence of arthritis in 85-year-olds is 65.4%, occurring most commonly in women. These findings suggest that the prevalence of arthritis is higher than in previous studies of 85-year-olds.

Arthritis is strongly associated with age, yet surprisingly few studies have investigated how arthritis affects the oldest old – those aged 85 years and older – who will number 3.3 million in the UK by 2033.

The research is from an observational cohort study

that looked at 1040 85-year-olds, born in 1921, from general practices in Newcastle upon Tyne and North Tyneside Primary Care Trusts. The results showed that the lifetime prevalence of 'any arthritis' was high, occurring in 673 participants (65.4%), and was more common in women than men (69.1% vs 58.8%, $P=0.001$).

Osteoarthritis was prevalent in 534 participants (51.9%) and was found more in women than men (57.1% vs 42.5%). Osteoarthritis was most common in the knee joint followed by the hip and hand.

Many participants identified the knee as the most painful joint, although the foot, ankle and lower back received the highest pain score. Women reported a higher median pain score for all joints except the shoulder and foot.

In the preceding month, almost two-thirds of the population reported joint pain, with 71.7% reporting pain on most days of the month. This is marginally higher than previous population studies.

Duncan R, Francis RM, Collerton J et al (2011) Prevalence of arthritis and joint pain in the oldest old: findings from the Newcastle 85+ Study. *Age Ageing* Sep 21 [Epub ahead of print]