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World Sepsis Day: All Nations Asked to Develop a National Action Plan on Reducing Preventable Deaths from Sepsis

As a prelude to World Sepsis Day 2016, a record number of 15,000 clinicians and health organizations participated in the 1st World Sepsis Congress, the largest virtual scientific meeting ever to be held on the burden, challenges and solutions to sepsis, the silent global killer.

This year's World Sepsis Day is marked by a call to action by the Global Sepsis Alliance (GSA) to address the growing burden of sepsis, the leading cause of preventable death in developed and developing countries around the world. The Global Sepsis Alliance, a worldwide collaboration of prominent clinicians and healthcare associations, is appealing to every country to establish a national action plan to reduce deaths from sepsis, often referred to as 'blood poisoning' but more accurately defined as the life-threatening condition that arises when the body's response to infection results in organ dysfunction or failure.

"One of our goals is to have the incidence of sepsis, the leading cause of preventable deaths, decrease by at least 20 per cent by the year 2020," said Dr. Konrad Reinhart, Chair of the Global Sepsis Alliance. "We can achieve this globally by promoting primary prevention by practices of good general hygiene and hand washing, clean obstetric care, improvements in sanitation, nutrition and delivery of clean water, and through vaccination programs for at risk patient populations in resource poor areas as well as early identification and treatment of those afflicted."

The GSA is encouraging the establishment of robust preventative strategies and more comprehensive inter-professional education programs and protocols that promote the early screening, recognition, and management of sepsis. By 2020, the GSA's goal is to have two-thirds of acute health systems, community and primary care organizations in participating countries incorporate routine sepsis screening into the care of acutely ill patients.

"We are asking every nation to develop a national action plan to reduce sepsis, in this we are supported by our global leaders, all of whom participated in the 1st World Congress," Dr. Reinhart added. "We have seen many examples of sepsis reduction achieved through simple, cost-effective measures. Brazil, the UK, USA, Ireland, Thailand and Spain have proven that sepsis deaths can be reduced through coordinated action. By implementation of broad-based prevention programs, and appropriate early recognition and treatment protocols, millions of death from sepsis could and should be prevented."

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Members of the GSA are calling on the World Health Assembly, the decision-making body of the World Health Organization, to adopt a resolution on reducing sepsis globally at their 2017 annual meeting. National campaigns are currently underway by the US Center for Disease Control and the UK Department of Health reinforcing that sepsis is a medical emergency and in which rapid recognition and treatment is as critical as in heart attack or stroke.

Around the world, countless survivors of sepsis and families of those lost to sepsis, are moved to share their personal experiences of this devastating syndrome. Idelette Nutma-Bade, a nurse from the Netherlands has written a book entitled *Sepsis and afterwards* to help families and survivors of sepsis cope with the myriad of physical and mental challenges.

Ms. Nutma-Bade writes: “The reason I wrote this book is because of my own illness, back in 2007, when I was admitted to the ICU suffering from a septic shock. My condition was critical and my family was informed that 'it could go either way', leaving them between hope and fear... It was not until my discharge that I came to understand the extensive process of recovery after critical illness. Moreover, I came to realise that the need for explanation, support and advice, as well as the importance of providing the patient with a good start of the recovery process, was seriously underestimated. Having been a former nurse, I considered this an important eye opener.”

World Sepsis Day is held on September 13th every year. WSD activities have increased globally and will continue until preventable deaths and disability related to sepsis no longer occur.

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