

Taking Action for Cardiovascular Health Around the Globe



World Heart Day 2017

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“We have the scientific knowledge to create a world in which most heart disease and stroke could be eliminated.”

The Victoria Declaration on Heart Health, 1992

AN INTERNATIONAL HEART HEALTH OBSERVANCE

World Heart Day, now celebrated annually on September 29, was conceptualized by the World Heart Federation leadership in consultation with national and international health organizations nearly 25 years ago [1]. Its observance was seen as an effective way to engage the media, civil society, policy-makers, foundations, and professional societies and their members in creating awareness about heart disease and stroke and stimulating action to promote cardiovascular health for all [1]. World Heart Day has also been seen as an opportunity to recognize scientific advances in cardiovascular disease (CVD) prevention and treatment, to survey the present and future challenges, and to seek opportunities for international partnerships to address the continuing epidemic of CVD [2].

As shown in Table 1, the themes of the World Heart Day observance over the past 17 years have encompassed all aspects of the prevention and control of heart disease and stroke. Beginning with the benefits of routine physical activity (in 2000) to the targeted emphasis on women, children, and young adults (in 2003 and 2004) and the focus on creating and facilitating access to heart-healthy environments (in 2014 and 2015), these themes have leveraged compelling evidence-based strategies for promoting cardiovascular health and preventing CVD. In particular, the theme for World Heart Day 2017 highlights the powerful difference that small changes in physical activity and nutrition, and tobacco cessation can make, and how that knowledge can help inspire millions of people around the world to be heart healthy [3].

The World Heart Day themes and activities they engender reinforce the central messages of a quarter century of international heart health declarations that began in Victoria, Canada about a decade before the launch of the World Heart Day observance. As shown in Table 2, the declarations have focused on a broad array of overarching themes that range from bridging the gap between science and policy (in 1992) and positioning technology to serve global heart health (in 2004) to improving circulatory health for all people (in 2016). This article highlights the convergence between the World Heart Day themes and

those of the international heart health declarations and explores the opportunity for strategic partnerships for accelerating active dissemination and implementation research to inform collective actions for heart health.

INTERNATIONAL HEART HEALTH DECLARATIONS

In the foreword to the Victoria Declaration [4], Farquhar and McLean stated firmly that we now know “beyond a doubt, how cardiovascular disease can be prevented” and called for help to turn that knowledge into action for heart health. This was also the central theme of the Victoria Declaration—that “cardiovascular diseases are largely preventable, that we have the scientific knowledge to eliminate most cardiovascular diseases, and that the public health infrastructure and capacity to address prevention were lacking” [4]. Recognizing the huge gap between knowledge and actions, the declaration was designed to serve as “an instrument with the potential to bridge gaps between theory and practice, between philosophy and reality, between societies whose main battle with cardiovascular disease is behind them, and those whose struggles are beginning or intensifying” [4]. This has remained a central heart health aspiration worldwide, and an enduring principle of World Heart Day activities across the globe.

The Catalonia Declaration in 1995 and its follow-up document in 1997 highlighted the importance of adequate investments in heart health and reaffirmed that investing in policies and programs for CVDs saves lives [5,6]. The follow-up document also provided examples of successful CVD prevention programs worldwide, including 41 case studies intended as guides. Building on these tenets, the Singapore Declaration in 1998 addressed the necessity of forging the economic and political will to undertake the challenges and provide the resources necessary for effecting improvements in heart health [7]. The Singapore Declaration, in particular, popularized the concept that “the capacity to successfully implement heart health initiatives requires both a new or expanded infrastructure at the international, national, and local levels, and a sustained will to address heart health within institutions, governments, agencies, and organizations with responsibility for health” [7].

In May 2000, the First International Conference on Women, Heart Disease and Stroke convened in Victoria, Canada and issued the related 2000 Victoria Declaration [8]. The conference was unique in successfully bringing together two important international movements, Heart Health and Women’s Health, to address the importance of CVDs in women [8]. The declaration highlighted both the scientific advances and research gaps as well as

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TABLE 1. World Heart Day annual themes and areas of emphasis

Year	Theme	Emphasis
2000	I Love my Heart: Let it Beat	Benefits of physical activity in the prevention of cardiovascular disease
2001	A Heart for Life	Importance of maintaining a healthy life for a lifetime
2002	What Shape are you in?	Importance of getting into healthy shape through physical activity
2003	Women, Heart Disease and Stroke	Prevention, treatment, and control of heart disease and stroke in women
2004	Children, Adolescents and Heart Disease	Preventing the development of cardiovascular risk factors in children and youth
2005	Healthy Weight, Healthy Shape	Controlling body weight and maintaining a healthy shape to reduce the risk of heart disease and stroke
2006	How Young is Your Heart?	Prevention and control of risk factors to keep the heart young and healthy
2007	Team Up for Healthy Hearts!	Importance of people joining together to take actions for preventing and controlling risk factors
2008	Know your Risk	Awareness of risk factors
2009	I Work with Heart	Workplace wellness for preventing heart disease and stroke
2010		
2011	One World, One Heart, One Home	Importance of the home, women, and children in heart disease prevention worldwide
2012		
2013	Take the road to a healthy heart	The importance of a life-course approach to the prevention and control of cardiovascular disease and the notion that the road to success begins early in life
2014	Heart Choices, Not Hard Choices	Everyone should have access to a heart-healthy environment where they live, learn, work, and play
2015	Creating heart-healthy environments	Help create heart-healthy environments where persons live, work and play
2016	Power your life	Understand what you can do to fuel your heart and power your life
2017	Fuel your heart. Move your heart. Love your heart. And share the power	Small changes can make a powerful difference. Inspire millions of people around the world to be heart healthy.

opportunities for advancing cardiovascular health in women [8]. Its 22 recommendations covered research on determinants of heart disease and stroke; policies, services, and programs important for advancing cardiovascular health in women; highlighted the lack of awareness of “women-specific aspects of heart health” that has impeded progress in this area; and emphasized the need to link scientific knowledge with heart health initiatives across the globe to facilitate the development of actions to reduce the burden of heart diseases and stroke in women both globally and locally [8]. Again, all of these issues also remain core aspects of World Heart Day activities.

The Osaka Declaration in 2001 emphasized the global nature of the CVD burden and highlighted the need to address economic and political factors that originate primarily from outside the health sector but are important because they “shape the policies, environments, behaviors and priorities of health systems” that play a crucial role on the development and implementation of heart health policies and programs worldwide [9]. The central premise and

recommendations of the Osaka Declaration are consistent with several World Heart Day themes, especially the 2014 theme of “Heart Choices, Not Hard Choices” that highlighted the factors that facilitate access to heart-healthy environments for people to live, learn, work, and play.

Recognizing the technological advances that could be leveraged to inform actions for the prevention and control of CVDs, the advisory board of the 5th International Heart Health Conference convened in Milan in June 2004 and explored how technology could be positioned to advance global health. The ensuing Milan Declaration examined a broad range of technologies and their potential to reduce the burden of CVDs and made 12 recommendations that called on governments at all levels and international social and economic development agencies to marshal technology to improve the heart health of the world’s population [10]. World Heart Day activities have found creative ways in which to use technological tools and apps to advance cardiovascular health [11,12]. Importantly, the Milan Declaration highlighted the need for all governments to

TABLE 2. 25 years of international declarations on heart health, 1992 to 2016

	Date	Theme and Major Statements
Victoria Declaration [4] British Columbia, Canada	May 28, 1992	Bridging the Gap: Science and Policy in Action <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CVD is largely preventable. We have the scientific knowledge to eliminate most CVD; the public health infrastructure and capacity to address prevention were lacking. • Presented 6 policy principles, 6 implementation processes, and 2 calls for action on public policies and partnerships. • Overall, it presented 64 recommendations on population groups, risk factor strategies, developing world needs, research, and global partnerships.
Catalonia Declaration [5,6] Barcelona, Catalonia, Spain	June 1, 1995	Investing in Heart Health <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investing in policies and programs for CVD prevention succeeds in saving lives and failing to make such investments does the opposite. • Presented a framework for action; and contained 41 case studies as guides, and added 12 recommendations to the 64 in the Victoria Declaration. • A follow-up document provided several examples of programs that have invested in heart health [6].
Singapore Declaration [7] Singapore	September 2, 1998	Forging the Will for Heart Health in the Next Millennium <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Addressed the need to forge the economic and political will to undertake the challenges and provide the resources necessary for improving heart health. • Provided guidance on how to build capacity by developing a heart health infrastructure and identifying and creating the political will to act. • Provided 24 recommendations with emphasis on leadership, policy-making, infrastructure, and forging the political will to act for heart health.
2000 Victoria Declaration [8] British Columbia, Canada	May 10, 2000	Science and Policy in Action <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brought together 2 international movements—Heart Health and Women’s Health— to focus on heart diseases and stroke in women. • Highlighted scientific advances, research gaps, and opportunities for CVD in women. • Made 22 recommendations covering research on determinants of CVD in women and policies, services, programs, and capacity for action.
Osaka Declaration [9] Osaka, Japan	May 22, 2001	Health Economics and Political Action: Stemming the Global Tide of Cardiovascular Disease <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examined factors that arise primarily from outside the mandate and control of the health and healthcare “sector” and profoundly influence on a global scale. • Assessed the economic and political context for individual lifestyle choices, and the impact of globalization and other forces that can overwhelm health.
Milan Declaration [10] Milan, Italy	June 16, 2004	Positioning Technology to Serve Global Heart Health <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examined a broad range of technologies and their potential to reduce the burden of CVD. • Highlighted the need for all governments to choose the right mix of highly technical and expensive technologies that benefit the few and less-expensive population-level strategies that promote health for the entire population. • Made 12 recommendations that called predominantly on governments at all levels and international social and economic development agencies to marshal technology to improve the heart health of the world’s population.

(continued)

TABLE 2. Continued

	Date	Theme and Major Statements
Mexico Declaration [13] Mexico City, Mexico	June 5, 2016	Improving Circulatory Health for All People <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Called for a coordinated response to the global heart disease and stroke pandemic in alignment with the United Nations goal of a 25% reduction in the risk of premature noncommunicable disease mortality by 2025. • Emphasized a common international advocacy strategy to promote policies for circulatory health to influence international, regional, and national actions for CVD prevention and control. • Highlighted a common implementation strategy to ensure that evidence-based interventions are implemented for CVD patients and their caregivers; those at high risk for CVD, including those with diabetes; and for populations worldwide. • Delivered a communications strategy through a common platform to amplify the voice for circulatory health with politicians, policy makers, and the public.

CVD, cardiovascular disease.

find the appropriate balance between highly technical and expensive technologies that benefit the few and less expensive population-level strategies that promote health for the entire population [10].

THE LANDMARK MEXICO DECLARATION ON CIRCULATORY HEALTH

In comparison to the preceding international heart health declarations, the Mexico Declaration on Circulatory Health (Mexico Declaration) [13] is unique in one important aspect. The international heart health declarations that preceded the Mexico Declaration were all signed by individual members of the advisory boards of the respective conferences without the endorsement of their affiliated institutions and organizations. In contrast, the Mexico Declaration carries the organizational endorsement, full commitment, and pledge of the signatories, which include the World Health Organization, the World Heart Federation, the World Stroke Organization, and the major global, continental, regional, and national heart and stroke organizations [13]. Additionally, the Mexico Declaration is historic in calling for a coordinated response to the global CVD epidemic in alignment with the United Nations goal of a 25% reduction in the risk of premature noncommunicable disease mortality by 2025 and in highlighting a common implementation strategy to ensure that evidence-based interventions are implemented for CVD patients and their caregivers, for those at high risk for CVD, including those with diabetes, and for populations worldwide [13]. Its other historic features are shown in Table 2.

CELEBRATING WORLD HEART DAY 2017

As we celebrate World Heart Day in 2017 by taking concrete actions for cardiovascular health around the globe, it is important to also celebrate the research successes that have provided the evidence base upon which effective

interventions for cardiovascular health promotion and CVD prevention, treatment, and control have been built. It will also be important to remember the quarter-century march from Victoria to Mexico City, and collectively reaffirm the aspirations and commitments of the various international heart health declarations. As the Victoria Declaration so eloquently stated, we know enough to eliminate most cardiovascular disease; but knowing is not enough. The time has come to also heed the Mexico Declaration by taking action to close the implementation gap and improve circulatory health for all people.

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