

The Heart and Stroke Foundation of Barbados celebrated World Heart Day as part of Barbados Heart and Stroke Week. The activities included a poster and essay competition for primary school students.

In Kenya, the Kenya Heart Foundation emphasized the importance of physical activity to heart health by organizing a 5-km walk and two football matches. One match was between high school girls to stress the importance of women's heart health.

## Asia responds

The Japan Heart Foundation celebrated World Heart Day with various awareness building activities. Its volunteers distributed tapes for measuring waist circumference. In Tokyo, it organized a public symposium about walking and controlling blood pressure as means to ensure a healthy heart.

In Taiwan, the Taiwan Society of Cardiology emphasized physical activity. Despite rain, 600 people participated in the various events, which included health check ups, educational games and the sharing of athletes' tips about exercise.

In Mangalore, India, Olympian Vandana Shanbhag led a 4-km race to encourage jogging as a way to keep one's heart young and healthy. Volunteers distributed free water bottles. The race culminated with refreshments and speeches about the benefits of a heart-healthy lifestyle.

In the Seychelles, Health Minister Macsuzy Mondon presented 30 "Healthy Heart Award" certificates for sustainable projects to improve community heart health. Among the recognized projects were restaurants that serve heart-healthy food, schools



that have taken steps to reduce student obesity and workplaces that have banned smoking and organized exercise classes for their workers.

The next World Heart Day will be on Sunday, 30 September 2007, and will focus on healthy families and communities.

doi:10.1016/j.precon.2006.11.002

## World Heart Federation launches global RHD centre

The World Heart Federation has launched a global Centre of Excellence for the control of rheumatic heart disease (RHD).

"The global Centre of Excellence in RHD Control is a web-based resource primarily for clinicians, health practitioners and policy-makers in developing countries, where the disease is still common," said Professor Sidney Smith, Chairman of the World Heart Federation's Scientific Advisory Board.

"Anyone with access to the Internet can download the latest guidelines, educational and training materials, ask questions and submit their own materials. It is an invaluable resource for developing countries and is a model for how health information should be presented for any disease."

Some of the training resources and training materials are already available online at: <http://www.worldheart.org/about-sab-councils-acute-rheumatic-fever.php>

## Bacterium causes RHD

Rheumatic fever (RF) can develop after an infection by the group A streptococcus bacterium. The resulting inflammatory illness, called rheumatic heart disease, can damage heart valves, leading to disability or death.

RF strikes an estimated 500,000 people per year. The number of people living with RHD is estimated at 15.5 million to 19.6 million, of whom more than 3 million are estimated to be children. RHD kills up to 300,000 people per year.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Heartbeat*, September 2004, Carapetis J, Chairman, World Heart Federation Council on Rheumatic Fever and Rheumatic Heart Disease.

Over the last 150 years, the developed world has seen a steady decline in the incidence of RF and RHD through improved living conditions and the widespread use of penicillin for the treatment of streptococcal pharyngitis. However, developing countries continue to face unacceptably high rates, making RHD the most common cardiovascular disease affecting children and young adults.<sup>2</sup>

### **World Heart Federation leads control effort**

The World Heart Federation is a leader in the effort to reduce RF and RHD. It has been concentrating its effort in one of the regions of greatest prevalence: the South Pacific Islands. Its three-year programme, which began last year, has several components:

- To develop standardized diagnostic resources and training materials.
- To help local governments to establish comprehensive and sustainable RHD control programmes.
- To establish the centre of global excellence.

Progress has been rapid. In Fiji, screening of school children and local and regional training workshops have begun, and all known cases of rheumatic heart disease have been registered. In Samoa, the active programme has just commenced.

“The World Heart Federation programme is saving lives and significantly improving the health of many people in the South Pacific Island region,” said Dr. Carapetis, Chairman of the World Heart Federation’s Scientific Council on Rheumatic Fever and Rheumatic Heart Disease.

Said Professor Smith, “It’s not enough to train health workers and to identify and treat patients. We will also advocate for guaranteed supplies of high-quality antibiotics and for rheumatic heart disease to be recognized as an international clinical, public health and political priority.”

Lessons learned from controlling RHD in Fiji, Samoa and other islands will be applied in Africa.

The programme is made possible through the generosity of the Vodafone Group Foundation and the State of Geneva Solidarity Fund.

doi:10.1016/j.precon.2006.11.001

Available online at [www.sciencedirect.com](http://www.sciencedirect.com)

 ScienceDirect

---

<sup>2</sup> Carapetis JR, McDonald M, Wilson NJ. Acute rheumatic fever. *Lancet*. 2005a;366:155–168.