

Editorial Article

## Use Heart to Beat Heart Disease

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Health is defined as a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing (spiritual - a probable addition in near future) and not merely an absence of disease or infirmity. "Health for all," necessitates the provision of essential health services to every citizen and needs to be the focal point of all health-related policies. The essential health services imply the removal of all obstacles to health like the elimination of ignorance, malnutrition, contaminated drinking water, unhygienic housing and a resolution of pure medical issues such as lack of doctors, hospital beds, drugs and vaccines. Various Govt. initiatives like Swachh Bharat, providing safe drinking water, midday meal program, vaccination programs, universal health coverage, etc. are all the welcome baby steps to achieve such a goal. However, as per WHO reports approximately 1 out of 17 of the world's population lack access to these essential health services and meanwhile, the current pandemic also has unveiled the broken and undermined healthcare system of every country. Not only has the pandemic shone a spotlight on the failing healthcare system but also has stressed that health is an individual responsibility and one needs to work for his/her health and those vulnerable in society.

Heart health is one single component of Health that needs to be mentioned separately as it is the organ when in dysfunction, kills approximately 17.5 million people per year, contributes to 1/3rd of all deaths on the planet and is the leading cause of death and disability. Triggering these diseases is an unhealthy diet, physical inactivity, tobacco use and the excess of alcohol.

These, in turn, show up in people as raised blood pressure, elevated blood glucose, overweight, dyslipidaemia and obesity. All these risk factors alone or in unison are detrimental to good health and according to World Heart Federation, 80% of premature deaths due to non-communicable diseases can be avoided by taking preventive measures either by prevention of risk factor development (primordial prevention) or by modification of these risk factors once they are established (primary prevention). As prevention is better than cure, the measures that improve the quality of life and create awareness among masses to alter, reduce, or modify these risk factors for heart disease need to be emphasized. By making just a few small changes in our lives, we can reduce our risk of heart disease and stroke, as well as improve our quality of life and set a good example for the next generation.

**World Heart Day**, celebrated on the 29th September every year, is an attempt of one such small change that aims at improving global health by encouraging people for lifestyle changes, imparting knowledge and making them aware of the ways considered to be good for the heart. As we are in an unprecedented situation because of Covid19 and are not sure what course the pandemic is going to take in near future, patients are facing a double-edged threat. Not only are they at a higher risk of developing severe forms of the virus, but they may also be afraid to seek ongoing care for their hearts. It, thus, becomes imperative to take every good care of the heart.

This year, the global campaign of World Heart Day is to focus upon our hearts and the hearts of our beloved ones. It's about saying to ourselves, the people we care about and the individuals all around the world, "**Use the Heart to beat the Heart disease**," meaning thereby that the heart should be used to make better choices, listen to the loved ones, thank the healthcare professionals and take part in activities more than before so that a powerful platform for a positive change is created that helps people to live longer, better and healthier. The main call to action for this year's campaign is to make a Promise.

**A Promise as an Individual** to set an example for loved ones by being more active physically, avoid sedentary habits, limit the screening time to less than one hour a day, say no to smoking, eat a healthier diet, promote healthy food habits at events/meetings and take out flexitime to attend exercise/ attend health programs.

**A Promise as a Healthcare Professional** to help your patients make positive changes for their heart health, save more lives, increase their lifespan and reduce the morbidity.

**A promise as an Employer** to look beyond the self and invest in the heart health of employees and support the most vulnerable in society.

**A Promise as a Social Person** to promote an environment of a healthy lifestyle like yoga, regular exercises, healthy food habits and stand against all odds to confront an unnecessary promotion of junk foods, cold drinks, tobacco, and alcohol use in advertisements by the celebrities of likes of Bollywood and sports personnel.

**A Promise as a Policymaker or Government** to implement a Non-communicable action plan like Comprehensive tobacco control policies, restricted usage or ban on smoking and E-cigarettes, increase taxes on junk foods to reduce their intake, build walking tracks and cycle paths to increase physical activity and provide healthy school meals for children.

**A simple Promise ... For My Heart, For Your Heart and All Our Hearts.**

The political commitment along with the community participation and support of health-related sectors is needed so that a socially equitable, self-reliant and universally covered healthcare is created. By sharing knowledge we can inspire each other to become more aware of a healthy heart and social media sites like Twitter, Facebook, Instagram pages, etc can be used to boost the campaign by sharing heart-healthy selfies and spread the knowledge....

**Healthy Heart is Healthy Life.**

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