

## The World Health Organization pledge to prevent and control diabetes

The World Health Organization (WHO) has pledged its continued commitment to providing technical support for the development and implementation of policies and strategies for the prevention and control of diabetes.

WHO made the pledge during celebrations marking World Health Day held under the theme: 'Prevention and Control of Diabetes'.

Speaking at Liberia's Ministry of Information press briefing, Liberia's WHO Representative, Alex Gasasira said that diabetes has risen from four million to 25 million within the African region.

He attributed the sharp rise to rapid uncontrolled urbanisation, globalisation, and major changes in lifestyle with a resultant increase in the prevalence of the lifestyle risk factors.

According to Gasasira, unhealthy diets, lack of physical exercise, tobacco use, alcohol consumption, obesity, and overweight are some of the factors that could contribute to the two types of diabetes, which he named as Diabetes One and Diabetes Two.

He explained that Diabetes One is characterised by insufficient insulin production in the body, which requires daily injection of insulin, while Diabetes Two results from ineffective use of insulin in the body.

'I urge all governments to implement the globally agreed actions to prevent and control diabetes, most especially with the global increase from 108 to 422 million in 2014,' he warned.

World Health Day is a global health awareness day celebrated every year on 7 April, under the sponsorship of WHO.

In 1948, the WHO held the First World Health Assembly. The Assembly decided to celebrate 7 April of each year, with effect from 1950, as World Health Day.

Gasasira explained that the disease can be prevented by maintaining normal body weight, engaging in regular physical activity, eating healthy diets that include sufficient consumption of fruits and vegetables and avoiding alcohol consumption and use of tobacco.

## Diabetes patch technology aiming to eliminate finger prick test

Most diabetic patients need a finger prick test several times a day to determine whether their blood sugar level is under control.

But the developers of a transparent patch with its electric circuits and tiny gold plates claim that they may be freed from this painful routine.

The device allegedly allows people with diabetes to easily monitor their blood sugar levels and the medication to be injected when and where necessary.

Dae-Hyeong Kim, Professor of Chemical and Biological Engineering, Seoul National University says: 'Diabetic patients are very reluctant to measure blood sugar, or get an insulin shot in public. This creates a problem with the management of that disease. Things that a person with diabetes should take care of on a daily basis are often only done once a fortnight. This technology makes the diabetes management painless. It's also not visible to others and less stressful.'

The sensors of the patch send the data collected from the patient's sweat to a smartphone app, which makes calculations



based on the sweat-based data. If the app judges that the patient needs medication, then the micro-needles embedded in the patch deliver the drug.

Developers who claim the thin micro-needles cause hardly any pain to the patient are now looking ahead.

'I think that the diabetes patch can enter the market within a short time after the technical development stabilises and a process for mass production is established. Nevertheless, in order to commercialise the patch, new plants should be built, production lines should be established, and we still need to get certified. The patch needs to go through animal testing and clinical demonstration because drug from the patch is injected into the body, and I think it will take more than five years to complete this process,' he continued.

According to World Health Organization, diabetes affects around 422 million adults worldwide, killing 1.5 million people each year.

## Zimbabwe Diabetic Association seeking free access to medications

The Zimbabwe Diabetic Association estimates that 10 out of 100 people in the country have diabetes but may be unaware, as many people remain undiagnosed due to lack of knowledge about the disease.

Dr. John Mangwiro, president of the association, said they are lobbying government to provide free access to diabetic medications as the cost of managing the disease continues to escalate.

'We hope that diabetes management medications become more accessible and can be provided for free like other chronic disease management regimes and we are currently lobbying government to make this a reality,' said Dr. Mangwiro.

Dr. Mangwiro said lack of current statistics on the disease and its prevalence is hampering progress in coming up with a comprehensive programme of managing the disease.

He said: 'We are aware that figures are going up but we need current statistics to forward to government so that we can come up with a comprehensive national management program to help fight the disease.'

Current statistics from the association indicate that 1.4 million Zimbabweans have diabetes, which is characterised by dry mouth and extreme thirst, a constant need to urinate especially at night, and unexplained and unintentional weight loss.