World Health Day 2013 is being celebrated this year under the theme of “hypertension”, otherwise known as high blood pressure. The intention of this year’s campaign is to: raise awareness of hypertension and promote behavioural change with respect to primary prevention, improve the chances of early detection and promote effective management for patients. Although hypertension is a serious health problem in the Eastern Mediterranean Region and globally, it is preventable and treatable.

Globally, hypertension is estimated to cause 7.5 million deaths annually, representing more than 12% of all deaths. It increases the risk of heart attack, stroke, kidney failure, blindness and other vascular conditions. WHO estimates that high blood pressure affects about 40% of adults aged 25 years and older.

On 7 April, WHO will launch the global World Health Day campaign to persuade policy-makers, the regional and international community and other stakeholders to prioritize prevention, early detection and management of hypertension in national policies, programmes and activities. It also aims to involve communities and individuals in order to increase public awareness of the problem. The public awareness campaign will focus on preventive interventions that reduce the risk of hypertension.

An online information package has been developed for the campaign. Event organizers can download media and communication products in adjustable formats to enable language and cultural adaptation according to local contexts. The campaign will include a wide range of web, email and multimedia interactive products, with portals for collection of feedback and on-line updates.

This campaign is a year-long activity extending beyond 7 April to give WHO and Member States the opportunity of implementing sustainable activities over an expanded period of time. Communities, nongovernmental organizations and individuals are encouraged to develop plans with a number of booster events to maintain momentum in conducting events throughout the year.

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