

WHA71: PHYSICAL ACTIVITY FOR HEALTH

MORE ACTIVE PEOPLE FOR A HEALTHIER WORLD: DRAFT GLOBAL PLAN ON PHYSICAL ACTIVITY 2018—2030

ITEM 12.2

IntraHealth congratulates the WHO for developing More Active People for a Healthier World, the draft global plan on physical activity for health. Regular physical activity is associated with reduced risks of heart disease, stroke, and hypertension and is protective against breast and colon cancers. It can help individuals control their weight and reduce the risk of developing type 2 diabetes and metabolic syndrome. Regular physical activity can slow the loss of bone density—protecting bones and joints—and prevent falls, especially important in aging populations. Equally important, being physically active increases one's ability to do daily activities, improves mental health, and can increase the chances of living longer.

There is no doubt that physical inactivity is a leading risk factor for premature death from noncommunicable diseases (NCDs). Almost 40 million people die every year from preventable causes, many from NCDs. It is estimated that about 5 million adults die prematurely each year. Premature deaths from NCDs are not a problem only in high-income countries. An estimated 80% of these deaths occur in low- and middle-income countries. NCDs burden health systems also struggling with infectious diseases and cost economies enormously in lost productivity.

It's surprising that one out of four adults do not get enough physical activity and even more deplorable that more than four out of five adolescents (11- to 17-year-olds) don't move enough. If we can reduce the global burden of NCDs and save lives by making it feasible for more people to engage in physical activity, why aren't we doing more?

As the DG's report states, there is no single policy response to physical inactivity. (There is also no single policy response to getting people to want to be more active.) There are, however, investments that can make it easier for individuals to "walk the talk." The draft global plan on physical activity outlines several of them. Perhaps the most challenging is to change social norms and attitudes to make physical activity more desirable. Health workers must play an essential role as change agents. Preservice and in-service training must include a new focus on the promotion of physical activity, and physical activity should be prescribed for disease prevention and management. Health workers and health policy makers can also serve as role models themselves.

Let's continue to "walk the talk" and set an example. We encourage the assembly to pass this resolution and encourage all to keep moving.