

European Summit on Cardiovascular Disease Prevention

"Bridging the unacceptable gap between what is recommended and what is achieved in daily practice regarding the prevention of cardiovascular disease" is how Prof Guy De Backer, Chairman of the CVD Prevention Committee of the European Society of Cardiology (ESC), summarises the aim of the European Summit on Cardiovascular Disease Prevention.

Creating incentives for people to make healthy choices in every European country is the difficult task that the 200 delegates of 46 countries and 27 health organisations have undertaken at the European Summit on Cardiovascular Prevention. The meeting took place at the Heart House, headquarters of the ESC, Sophia-Antipolis, France.

Cardiovascular disease (CVD) causes 49% of deaths in Europe, is the main cause of death in women on this continent and costs the EU over €169 billion a year. Getting countries to educate their population and allocating an adequate budget to preventive care and rehabilitation is therefore of the utmost importance.

By the end of 2008 all European countries will have subscribed to the European Heart Health Charter (www.heartcharter.eu) and will have set up a Joint National Task Force to take the necessary actions to implement it. The Fourth European Task Force recently published Guidelines for the Prevention of CVD, which are the result of a unique consensus between experts of different specialties. These guidelines must now be translated and implemented locally, taking into consideration national, cultural and socioeconomic issues.

Schools, hospitals and policy makers are being encouraged to increase their efforts to educate people on the basics of heart disease prevention which include a balanced diet, physical activity and avoidance of tobacco. Actions which lead to the reimbursement of CVD prevention within existing healthcare and private insurance plans are also being encouraged by countries and organisations attending the European Summit.

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