



American Academy of Nursing
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American Academy of Nursing Supports the United Nations High-Level Meeting on Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs)

Academy launches Health Behavior Expert Panel to commit to globally fighting NCDs

Washington, DC (September 20, 2011): The American Academy of Nursing supports the United Nations High-Level two day meeting on Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) being held in New York City, NY, ending today, September 20. It is expected that as an outcome of this meeting the United Nations (UN) will politically commit to globally fighting NCDs.

After considerable and necessary attention on reducing infectious diseases such as HIV/AIDs in the twentieth century, the World Health Organization (WHO) now recognizes NCDs as the leading cause of 36 million annual preventable deaths. NCDs of major concern include cardiovascular disease, cancer, chronic respiratory diseases, and diabetes, as the leading causes of 60% of deaths worldwide. Four major risk factors have been identified by the WHO and include: tobacco use, unhealthy diets, physical inactivity, and harmful use of alcohol. By addressing the four identified health behaviors, it is estimated that up to 80% of heart disease, stroke, and type 2 diabetes along with over a third of all cancers can be prevented.

As the largest group of healthcare professionals, the 19 million nurses worldwide have tremendous potential in reducing the behavior risk factors associated with NCDs. Nursing research already has significantly influenced clinical practice regarding treatment of NCDs and the reduction of the four risk factors.

Commensurate with the burden of NCDs and the opportunities to enhance health outcomes with innovative solutions, the American Academy of Nursing launched an Expert Panel on Health Behaviors this year chaired by Kathleen A. O'Connell, PhD, RN, FAAN to address the health needs of populations, providing a forum for nurse leaders to advance evidence-based innovations to promote healthy lifestyles as fundamental to healthcare delivery.

Catherine Gilliss, DNSc, RN, FAAN, President of the Academy, remarked, "nursing involvement at all levels will be crucial to any strategies to confront NCDs. The Academy encourages the UN to include language in the documents resulting from this meeting that encourage nations to expand nursing capacity to address the prevention and treatment of NCDs and reduce risk factors by supporting expansion of nursing education, research, and promoting nursing leadership in policy development and implementation."

The American Academy of Nursing stands ready to assist policy makers in carrying forward plans to tackle the NCD epidemic and urges the negotiating member States to involve nurses in the efforts to address NCDs and reduce risk factors on all levels.

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