

## The Heart and Stroke Foundation SA to commemorate World Health Day



**The World Health Organisation (WHO)** is an organization whose core mandate is to monitor, guide and provide expert opinion on health-related matters at a global level. A key focus of the WHO is to use public health as an underlying philosophical departure point to guide efficient and quality systems, particularly at Primary Health Care (PHCP) level. The Heart and Stroke Foundation South Africa (HSFSA), aligns with the mission and vision of the WHO.

This year the WHO turns 75 years old and we celebrate their excellent work in monitoring and preventing health catastrophes around the world. This year the theme for World Health Day is **“Health for All”**. Conceptualized and driven by the WHO under the auspices of the United Nations (UN), health organizations around the world whose work focuses on health outreach for public good, will also raise awareness about the importance of a fair, just and equitable health system which enables everyone to gain access to health care. This theme is aligned with the WHO’s work mission which is underpinned by a “Human Rights Framework” and as aptly stated by the WHO chief, Dr Tedros Ghebreyesus, *“Health is a human right. No one should get sick or die just because they cannot access the services they need.* Do join the HSFSA on the 7th April for World Health Day to call attention to this noble call for action.

Countries from all over the world founded WHO in 1948. The aim was to serve, protect and maintain the health of everybody, everywhere. The 75th year anniversary marks the memories which WHO can reflect upon and the achievements they have accomplished in health care. Thirty-percent (30%) of the global population is not able to access

essential health services and almost two billion people face catastrophic health spending with significant inequalities affecting those in the most vulnerable settings. The key messages for this year's campaign addresses both the public and member states.

This year's World Health Day aims to remind the public that health for all means that all people have good health for a fulfilling life in a peaceful, prosperous, and sustainable world. Further to this, it is emphasized that the right to health is a basic human right. Everyone must have access to the health care services they require when and where they need them, without financial hardship.

Universal health coverage (UHC) offers financial protection and access to quality essential services, lifts people out of poverty, promotes the well-being of families and communities and protects against public health crises. Most low and middle income countries such as South Africa still have to achieve UHC.

In order to make health for all a reality, we need: individuals and communities who have access to high quality health services so that they can take care of their own health and that of their families; skilled health workers providing quality, people-centered care; and policy-makers committed to investing in UHC. Evidence reveals that health systems fuelled by a primary health care (PHC) approach is the most effective and cost-effective way to bring services for health and well-being closer to people.

Pandemics such as COVID-19 and other health emergencies, overlapping humanitarian and climate crisis, economic constraints and war have made every country's journey to **#HealthForAll** more urgent. It is time for leaders to take action to meet UHC commitments and for civil society to hold leaders accountable. **In May 1994, Mr Nelson Mandela after becoming the President of the Republic Of South Africa proclaimed, “*health remains a fundamental building block of the humane society we are determined to create through the implementation of the Reconstruction and Development Programme*”. The importance of this statement still resonates in our current health dispensation. As the first President of a democratic South Africa, one of his finest legacies is the institution of free health care for mothers and children within the public health care system.**

Between the years 2023 and 2030, there is a projected shortfall of 10 million health workers globally. There is an urgency of investment in education and job creation within the health sector. Member states need to acknowledge that UHC is a political and social choice. Strong political leadership and public demand is required. Robust health systems are needed to deliver both UHC and emergency preparedness. WHO advises increases in health taxes on tobacco, alcohol, added sugar and fossil fuels. These taxes bring in necessary public revenues.

South Africa is considered to be one of the most liberal and most celebrated constitutions in the world. South Africa's constitution enforces our basic rights with the aim of all South Africans to have access to healthcare services. Since 1994, we have seen improvements in economic, social and cultural accomplishments. However, people within our communities still face challenges with the limited access between the public and private sectors and poverty within large population groups. As a result, individuals do not have access to clean water and sanitation. A decrease can be seen in obtaining adequate nutrition and having access to the immunizations required. [The current stats in South Africa shows us that about one-fifth\(23,5%\) of children that are 17 years and less do not live with their parents. We are faced with nuclear households that consist of one or two children and extended households that have larger families which have 3-4 children. This has a direct impact on the socio-economic state of the child and general welfare of our future generation.](#)

Professor Pamela Naidoo, CEO of The Heart and Stroke Foundation South Africa states that *“the Foundation unreservedly supports UHC for all medical conditions although its focus is primarily on CVD and its risk factors.”* The significant risk factors for CVDs include hypertension, diabetes, unhealthy diets, physical inactivity, hypercholesterolemia (increased cholesterol levels) and tobacco smoking. All these risk factors are modifiable through behavior change and/or a medical treatment regimen. The array of medical conditions that need to be treated in the private and public health sectors are complex. However, using the correct diagnostic tools can ensure early detection and linkage to care can prevent heart disease, strokes and a myriad of other treatable medical conditions.

Interviews will be conducted with our CEO, Professor Pamela Naidoo, Health Promotions Team, and Dieticians. To co-ordinate and confirm interview dates you are welcome to contact Mr. Themba Mzondi, our PR and Communications Officer on 021 422 1586 / 078 113 5216 or email [themba.mzondi@heartfoundation.co.za](mailto:themba.mzondi@heartfoundation.co.za)

### **About the Heart and Stroke Foundation SA**

The Heart and Stroke Foundation South Africa (HSFSA) plays a leading role in the fight against preventable heart disease and stroke, with the aim of seeing fewer people in South Africa suffer premature deaths and disabilities. The HSFSA, established in 1980 is a non-governmental, non-profit organization which relies on external funding to sustain the work it carries out.

The HSFSA aims to reduce the cardiovascular disease (CVD) burden in South Africa and ultimately on the health care system of South Africa. Our mission is to empower people in South Africa to adopt healthy lifestyles, make healthy choices easier, seek appropriate care and encourage prevention.

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