

World Heart Day: much more than a warning for life

Día Mundial del Corazón: mucho más que una alerta por la vida

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Cardiovascular diseases are the leading cause of death in the world and our country does not escape this reality.¹⁻³ The “leadership” of cardiac morbidity and mortality has surpassed the paradigm that this primacy was only for developed countries, to become a truly global pandemic.

Combined conditions affecting the heart or blood vessels, –such as heart attacks, strokes and heart failure–, take the lives of more than 20.5 million people each year. Unfortunately, most of these deaths occur in low- and middle-income countries. Factors such as unhealthy diet, physical inactivity, stress, tobacco smoking and harmful alcohol use contribute to the continued rise in these numbers.

That is why, in this context, it is decided to proclaim a date that, at a global level, calls for attention on cardiovascular disorders. Thus, World Heart Day is a global initiative celebrated every September 29th since 2000, promoted by the World Heart Federation (WHF).⁴

It was proclaimed during the World Congress of Cardiology in Rio de Janeiro in April 1998. The initiative was started by Antonio Bayés de Luna, president of WHF from 1997 to 1999, with the aim of raising awareness about the growing burden of cardiovascular diseases, especially in developing countries. The proclamation of this day responds to the need to address risk factors identified in the 2002 World Health Report such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol, tobacco use, alcohol consumption, low intake of fruits and vegetables and obesity. The WHF, in collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO), established this day to promote prevention and control of heart diseases through effective and affordable population interventions.⁴

This day in late September, annually, is a heartbeat for life; a bell that reminds us that caring for cardiovascular health is not just a right, but a duty and an obligation of every citizen, every country and every health system. It is also a reminder for all people around the world to take proper care of their hearts. This campaign is promoted by the World Heart Federation and supported by all scientific societies in the field, with particular emphasis on our Cuban Society of Cardiology.

Although every year a specific slogan is promoted to strengthen cardiovascular health and prevention actions, 2025 marks a special moment regarding this purpose, since this year we will celebrate the 25th anniversary of

World Heart Day; in this important anniversary our mission remains as crucial as ever.

Statistics say that one in five people will die prematurely from cardiovascular disease (CVD), which takes more lives than cancer and chronic respiratory diseases combined. However, we can reverse this reality if we consider that up to 80% of heart diseases and strokes are preventable by changing lifestyles, through affordable access to health care, early detection tests and more opportunities to make healthy nutrition choices and staying physically active. We cannot get tired, so every September 29th we celebrate this day and gain more consciousness. From individuals, families, workplaces, schools, to community groups, neighborhood associations, elderly people, government; we all work together to prioritize equitable cardiovascular health and drive global change.

On this World Heart Day, we say to the world: "do not miss a heartbeat, every heartbeat matters". We ask people as well to join our mission to make every heartbeat count, with better heart health and better access to life-saving care.

In 2023 more than 32 000 Cubans lost their lives due to cardiovascular diseases, a trend that has continued in recent years, with Villa Clara having a mortality rate of 295.6 per 100 000 inhabitants. On the other hand, the age groups in which fatal cardiac events occur are becoming younger, and regarding gender variable our women are more vulnerable even at pre-menopausal ages. Both aspects are a called for attention on which our actions must increasingly be directed to in the coming years specifically by developing research to respond to this contemporary health reality³

These are times of action, that is why accurate diagnoses are not enough. In close collaboration with health and sports authorities, health promotion and prevention, preventive epidemiology and government policies we will continue singing a song to life, where every heartbeat is stronger and necessary.

Thus, we are all going to be next September 29th, willing to fight for life and that is why we ask for "putting our heart in saving the heart".

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