

Global elimination of blinding trachoma

The Fifty-first World Health Assembly,

Recalling resolutions WHA22.29, WHA25.55 and WHA28.54 on the prevention of blindness, and WHA45.10 on disability prevention and rehabilitation;

Aware of previous efforts and progress made in the global fight against infectious eye diseases, in particular trachoma;

Noting that blinding trachoma still constitutes a serious public health problem amongst the poorest populations in 46 endemic countries;

Concerned that there are at present some 146 million active cases of the disease, mainly among children and women, and that in addition, almost six million people are blind or visually disabled as a result of trachoma;

Recognizing the need for sustainable community-based action - including surgery for intumed eyelids, antibiotics use, facial cleanliness and environmental improvement (the SAFE strategy) - for the elimination of blinding trachoma in the remaining endemic countries;

Encouraged by recent progress towards simplified assessment and enhanced management of the disease, including large-scale preventive measures, particularly for vulnerable groups;

Noting with satisfaction the recent establishment of the WHO alliance for the global elimination of trachoma, comprising certain collaborating nongovernmental organizations and foundations and other interested parties,

1. CALLS ON Member States:

(1) to apply the new methods for the rapid assessment and mapping of blinding trachoma in the remaining endemic areas;

(2) to implement, as required, the strategy including surgery for intumed eyelids, antibiotics use, facial cleanliness and environmental improvement (the SAFE strategy) for the elimination of blinding trachoma;

(3) to collaborate in the WHO alliance for the global elimination of trachoma and its network of interested parties for the global coordination of action and specific support;

(4) to consider all possible intersectoral approaches for community development in endemic areas, particularly for greater access to clean water and basic sanitation for the populations concerned;

2. REQUESTS the Director-General:

- (1) to intensify the cooperation needed with Member States in which the disease is endemic for the elimination of blinding trachoma;
- (2) further to refine the components of the SAFE strategy for trachoma elimination, particularly through operational research, and by considering potential antibiotic or other treatment schemes for safe large-scale application;
- (3) to strengthen interagency collaboration, particularly with UNICEF and the World Bank, for the mobilization of the necessary global support;
- (4) to facilitate the mobilization of extrabudgetary funds;
- (5) to report, as appropriate, to the Executive Board and the Health Assembly on progress made.

Tenth plenary meeting, 16 May 1998
A51/VR/10

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