

AAP Abroad

AAP works to keep children in focus on non-communicable diseases agenda

Non-communicable diseases of the child (NCDs) are responsible for a large proportion of global child mortality and morbidity. As our successes in communicable diseases progressed in the 20th century, the definition of the new morbidities and millennial morbidities evolved here in the United States and focused our attention on NCDs. This focus is shifting to all nations now as children's health improves in low-income and middle-income countries, due to successful immunization campaigns and improved newborn and maternal survival rates.

AAP efforts in neonatal resuscitation through the Neonatal Resuscitation Program and Helping Babies Breathe for low-resourced countries have resulted in significant decreases in mortality. This has allowed the agenda for children to progress to the Helping Babies Survive initiative, which aims to increase utilization and impact of high-quality maternal newborn and child health services in facilities. Lastly, these efforts have led to a natural progression to addressing yet largely untackled NCDs seen in high-, middle- and low-resourced countries alike.

The Academy recently has been designated the secretariat of the NCD Child, an informal alliance of organizations focused on advocacy for children and adolescents in the world's agenda. Representatives on NCD Child will provide a voice for children at upcoming key global health meetings and on the United Nation's post-2015 Millennium Development Goals on non-communicable diseases.



"NCD Child is helping us to focus on a whole host of child health issues that pediatricians in this country have been focused on but generally have not been thought about when looking at countries outside of these borders," said Danielle Laraque, M.D., FAAP, chair of AAP District II and the AAP Advisory Committee to the Board on Global Child Health. "The two branches of prevention and effective treatment become really important for our global perspective on non-communicable diseases."

What do the NCD Child goals address?

- prevention of injury (unintentional and intentional),
- tobacco and secondhand smoke, alcohol and drug abuse,
- obesity and support of healthy active living,
- mental health and early brain development,
- treatment for children with special health care needs, and
- access to care for children with disabilities, cancer, diabetes and other chronic diseases.

NCDs have supplanted infectious diseases in global morbidity and mortality, causing 1.2 million deaths per year for people under the age of 20, said Donna Staton, M.D., FAAP, who represented the Academy at the NCD Child conference in Port of Spain, Trinidad in March. "There are huge disparities in NCD deaths: 80% occur in low- and middle-income countries. It's really a myth that NCDs are diseases that affect only the wealthy countries."



At the 67th World Health Assembly meetings in May in Geneva, Switzerland, the Academy helped host an NCD Child roundtable with UNICEF. Moving forward, the Academy plans to seek support for training and technical assistance to national pediatric societies to include NCD Child in national agendas and country plans. Using the successful champions training model, the Academy will work with pediatric alliances such as the International Pediatric Association and other partners to develop training workshops as resources allow, ideally having a leader in every country.

"We as a medical community realize now more than ever that there's a link between poor health early in life and health status later in life," said Dr. Staton. "We have to make sure that the needs and voices of children are not left out in this new agenda."

RESOURCES

- NCD Child website, <http://www.ncdchild.org/>
- AAP Global Health website, <http://www2.aap.org/international/>