

Joining the Coalition: GARD, IRAN

After the 53rd World Health Assembly in the year 2000, the significance of chronic non-communicable diseases such as chronic respiratory disorders prompted the formation of a coalition under the supervision of World Health Organization and the cooperation and collaboration of related stakeholders. In this respect, 4 meetings were held during the years 2001-2004 leading to the formation of a coalition of medical federations, organizations and associations called the "Global Alliance against Chronic Respiratory Diseases" abbreviated GARD.

The continuing efforts of GARD at the international level have now attracted 40 countries from 6 geographical regions of the world to this project. In Iran, the first steps were taken to join in this global program in May 2008. After obtaining the approval of the Iranian Ministry of Health and correspondence with the GARD center of the WHO, Iran's application to join the GARD was approved on July 31, 2008. The first GARD assembly in Iran was held in the National Research Institute of Tuberculosis and Lung Disease (NRITLD) in October 2008 with the participation of medical associations, related organizations and representatives from the Ministry of Health. Establishment of chronic respiratory disease surveillance unit and provision of control programs nation-wide, conduction of research on the current status of chronic respiratory diseases in Iran, provision of necessary drugs for treatment of patients and undertaking adequate interventions to decrease related risk factors and reduce the prevalence of such diseases in the nation were among the GARD-Iran programs approved in this meeting.

Although in our country, similar to many developing countries, exact figures regarding the prevalence and incidence of chronic respiratory diseases (such as asthma, COPD, allergic rhinitis, sleep apnea syndrome, etc) are not available, we hope to obtain precise data in this regard and implement control programs for management of these diseases with the help of international GARD and enforcement of above-mentioned programs.

As it is well known cigarette smoking and tobacco use are the most important and most common risk factors for non-communicable diseases including cardiovascular diseases, cancers, chronic respiratory diseases and diabetes. Fortunately, the Islamic Republic of Iran has taken important actions in the field of tobacco control; most important of which are joining the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC), approving a comprehensive National Tobacco Control Law as well as a bill regarding annual increase of taxes on tobacco products in the Iranian parliament which was considered a giant leap for prevention and control of non-communicable chronic diseases especially chronic respiratory disease.

We hope that researchers and experts throughout the world will support this coalition by sharing each other's experiences and reflecting them in scientific medical journals.

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