

Press Release

PHYSICIANS IN SOME PARTS OF THE WORLD ARE NO LONGER TAUGHT TO DIAGNOSE AND TREAT TUBERCULOSIS

New Delhi: 15 October 2009: Concern that many doctors are no longer being taught to diagnose and treat tuberculosis (TB) has led the World Medical Association (WMA) to launch a new online refresher course for physicians.

The refresher course will provide basic clinical care information for TB including the latest diagnostics, treatment and information about multidrug-resistant TB. It will also provide information on how to ensure patient adherence and infection control and will include many aspects of TB care and management with a global scope so that it can be used across regions.

Launching the course at the WMA's annual General Assembly in New Delhi, Dr. Julia Seyer, Medical Adviser WMA, said, 'when we started an online multidrug-resistant tuberculosis (MDR-TB) training course in 2006, we discovered that many physicians were missing the most basic knowledge about normal TB'. With the disappearance of the disease from large parts of the world, many physicians from the developed world had never even seen a case of TB and had no basic training in diagnosing and treating what is a preventable disease.

'Now that TB has re-emerged as a serious global disease, it is vital that physicians around the world regain the basic knowledge they once had. The course will be useful in developing countries, where the majority of TB cases are, and will serve as a refresher of what physicians may have learned some time ago.'

The new course was written for the WMA by the New Jersey Medical School Global Tuberculosis Institute, USA. Launching the course in India today, Dr. Lee B. Reichman, Executive Director of the Institute, said, 'TB is often thought to be a "disease of the past," but 4,500 people a day are dying from it every day, most of whom in their most productive working years, aged 15 to 54'.

The new course, which incorporates key strategies of internationally accepted strategies for management and control of TB, will link to the WMA's MDR-TB course which has been running for the past two years. It is free of charge and can be used by physicians in private practice as well as in the public. Physicians will be able to receive credits for completing the course as part of their continuing medical education program. Although the course is available only in English at the moment, it will be translated into Spanish, French, Russian and Chinese.

Dr. Seyer also said that tuberculosis caused nine million new cases and two million deaths every year. Two billion people were infected with the disease worldwide. In some parts of the world, 75 per cent of HIV-positive patients were infected with TB.

The new online course is being financed by an unrestricted educational grant by the Lilly MDR-TB Partnership, which comprises several other organisations who are working together to improve tuberculosis control worldwide and to support the new Global Plan to Stop TB 2006-15.

Dr. Patrizia Carlevaro, Head of the International Aid Unit for Eli Lilly and Company, said: 'Through our partners, the Lilly MDR-TB Partnership is providing health care workers around the world with education to recognize, treat and monitor the spread of TB and MDR-TB. Through this initiative and additional activities which form part of the Partnership's multi-pronged approach, we are confident that we will change the lives of the millions of people affected by TB and MDR-TB across the globe'.

The Lilly MDR-TB Partnership is a public-private initiative led by Eli Lilly and Company to address the expanding crisis of multidrug-resistant tuberculosis (MDR-TB) together with more than 20 global health and development organisations, academic institutions and private companies. The partnership is pursuing a comprehensive strategy to fight MDR-TB by providing access to medicines, transferring manufacturing technology, training healthcare workers, raising awareness of the disease and providing resources for prevention, diagnosis and treatment of people living with MDR-TB.

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The World Medical Association is the independent confederation of national medical associations from 95 countries and represents more than eight million physicians. Acting on behalf of patients and physicians, the WMA endeavours to achieve the highest possible standards of medical care, ethics, education and health-related human rights for all people.

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