



PUBLICATIONS LAUNCH EVENT

NONCOMMUNICABLE DISEASES IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA:

Young People Are Key to Curbing a Growing Epidemic

TUESDAY, 12 DECEMBER 2017

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF SHARJAH,
UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

AstraZeneca 
Young Health Programme
A global community investment initiative

Noncommunicable diseases (NCDs), such as cardiovascular diseases, cancers, diabetes, and chronic respiratory diseases, are the leading causes of death throughout the Middle East and North Africa region (MENA). NCDs will put a tremendous strain on healthcare resources and will require strengthening already overstretched healthcare systems. Since they typically affect the most productive members of society, NCDs would also limit the potential for economic growth and development in the region's lower-income countries.

This negative trajectory can be changed, however, if countries prioritize preventing NCD risk behaviors. These risk behaviors—tobacco use, harmful use of alcohol, unhealthy diet, and insufficient physical activity—are typically established during adolescence or young adulthood and set the stage for the onset of NCDs later in life. Thus, a focus on young people is key.

Engaging a broad array of people, organizations, and sectors that can promote protective factors and minimize risk factors in all aspects of young people's lives is critical for addressing their NCD risk. Preventing a large NCD epidemic will also require strong political commitment and strengthening of regulatory capacity, as well as coordinated efforts to ensure that comprehensive surveillance of risk factors among young people takes place throughout the region.

The Population Reference Bureau (PRB) is launching two publications that can serve as advocacy materials to advance the dialogue at today's event: a policy report, "Curbing the Noncommunicable Disease Epidemic in the Middle East and North Africa: Prevention Among Young People is the Key," that illustrates the importance of tackling NCD risk factors among young people as key to curbing a growing NCD epidemic in the region; and a data sheet that presents the latest available prevalence data on the risk behaviors among young people across countries in MENA.

Additionally, presentations on recent research on tobacco use and overweight and obesity status, as well as on the intervention studies among young people in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), will provide on-the-ground insights into this critical issue.

9:00–9:30 AM MEETING REGISTRATION

9:30–12:30 PM SESSIONS

Master of Ceremonies, Mr. Martin Blaxall—Director, Corporate Brand and Communications, AstraZeneca

OPENING REMARKS

Mr. Liam Sollis—Policy and Advocacy Manager, AstraZeneca Young Health Programme

SESSION I

OVERVIEW OF NCD RISK FACTORS AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE ACROSS THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA AND STRATEGIES FOR ACTION

Dr. Toshiko Kaneda—Senior Research Associate, Population Reference Bureau

Dr. Sameh El-Saharty—Program Leader, Human Development, The Gulf Cooperation Council Countries, The World Bank

SHARJAH: THE FIRST HEALTHY CITY IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

Dr. Abdelaziz Saeed Bin Butti Almheiri—Director, Sharjah Health Authority

— TEA BREAK —

SESSION II

CIGARETTE SMOKING AND DIABETES AMONG YOUTH: A DOUBLE WHAMMY

Dr. Syed Shah—Professor & World Heart Federation Emerging Leader for NCDs Prevention, Institute of Public Health, College of Medicine & Health Sciences, United Arab Emirates University

EXERCISE INTERVENTION ON CARDIOVASCULAR DISEASE RISK FACTORS IN A UNIVERSITY POPULATION IN THE UAE

Dr. Sarah Dalibalta—Assistant Professor, Department of Biology, Chemistry, & Environmental Sciences, American University of Sharjah

TOBACCO USE AMONG YOUNG WOMEN: RESULTS FROM THE SURVEY OF FEMALE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

Dr. Heba Barazi—Assistant Professor, College of Natural & Health Sciences, Zayed University

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

12:30–1:30 PM NETWORKING LUNCH RECEPTION

Participant Biographies

Dr. Abdelaziz Saeed Bin Butti Almheiri



Dr. Almheiri is director of Sharjah Health Authority, a position he has held since 2014. He also serves as vice chairman of the board of trustees for University Hospital Sharjah, as secretary general of the United Arab Emirates' National Anti-Doping Committee, and as board member of the UAE Health Counsel. Dr. Almheiri is certified and accredited by Moody International (UK) as an auditor in occupational and environmental health and by the World Anti-Doping Agency as a doping control officer. He worked as a specialist doctor in the UAE Armed Forces from 1996 to 2009. He holds a Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery from

United Arab Emirates University and a Master's in occupational and environmental health from Monash University in Melbourne, Australia.

Dr. Heba Barazi



Dr. Barazi is assistant professor at the College of Natural and Health Sciences at Zayed University (ZU), where she has spearheaded the implementation of technology in the classroom by leveraging resources to improve student engagement and learning. Prior to joining ZU, Dr. Barazi spent more than 14 years working in the pharmaceutical industry, managing drug development programs for cancer and cystic fibrosis. This experience drives her to focus on research with the potential to directly impact health. In her current health science research at ZU, Dr. Barazi is engaged in two of the UAE's major health problems: smoking

and diabetes. She holds a Ph.D. in molecular biology and a B.S. in medical technology, both from the George Washington University in Washington, D.C.

Mr. Martin Blaxall



Mr. Blaxall serves as director of corporate brand and communications at AstraZeneca. He previously worked for British Gas, an energy utility company in the United Kingdom (UK), and its successor companies. He left National Grid, Britain's high-voltage electric power transmission network, as head of corporate communications before joining an independent management consultancy. Mr. Blaxall is a chartered company secretary. His experience includes corporate reporting; branding and sponsorship; internal and external communications; as well as organizational and other business issues, particularly during periods of corporate transformation.

Dr. Sarah Dalibalta



Dr. Dalibalta is assistant professor in the Department of Biology, Chemistry, and Environmental Sciences at the American University of Sharjah. She has used her expertise in a broad spectrum of electrophysiological recordings to study cardiovascular disorders such as Long QT syndrome, as well as blood diseases such as sickle cell anemia. More recently, she has been studying noncommunicable disease risk factors within the UAE population. Dr. Dalibalta's research interests lie in investigating the effects of physical activity interventions on improving health among young people in the UAE. Her teaching interests are in

the areas of physiology, pharmacology, genetics, cell biology, and biochemistry. She holds a Ph.D. in cell physiology and pharmacology from the University of Leicester in the United Kingdom and pursued her post-doctoral training at the University of Oxford.

Participant Biographies

Dr. Sameh El-Saharty



Dr. El-Saharty works as program leader for human development in the Department of the Gulf Cooperation Council Countries at the World Bank. He joined the World Bank in 1998 and during his tenure has been responsible for leading health policy dialogue and strategy development, as well as for managing several programs and projects in more than 25 countries in Africa, Asia, the Middle East, and the United States. His most recent work has focused on noncommunicable diseases, health-in-all policies, policy reform, service delivery, health governance and implementation, and delivery science. He has more than 30 publications to his credit, including journal articles, books, book chapters, analytical reports, and policy briefs. Before joining the World Bank, Dr. El-Saharty held positions with USAID, UNFPA, Harvard University, the American University in Cairo, and Pathfinder International. He is adjunct assistant professor of international health at Georgetown University in the United States, where he developed and taught the course “Combatting Noncommunicable Diseases in Developing Countries.” Dr. El-Saharty is a member of distinguished boards and committees, including the Global Think Tank of the Center for Translation Research and Implementation Science of the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute of Health; the Dean’s Leadership Council of the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health at the University of Boston; and the Advisory Committee of the MENA Health Policy Forum. He is a medical doctor who graduated from Cairo University and holds a Master of Public Health (MPH) from the Military Medical Academy in Egypt and an MPH in International Health Policy and Management from Harvard University.

Dr. Toshiko Kaneda



Dr. Kaneda is a senior research associate at Population Reference Bureau (PRB). She has 20 years of experience conducting research and demographic analysis on a wide range of population and health topics. Dr. Kaneda currently serves as the technical lead for PRB’s signature product, the annual World Population Data Sheet, which is in its 55th year of publication. She has written numerous policy communications and research translation publications, as well as peer-reviewed research articles on topics including population aging, old-age disability, NCDs, urban-rural health gaps, migration, health care access, and unmet need for family planning. She contributes to PRB’s policy communications training and provides technical guidance on demographic methods to NGO partners, researchers, and journalists. Prior to joining PRB, Dr. Kaneda was a recipient of the Bernard Berelson Fellowship at the Population Council in New York City, where she conducted comparative analyses on health transitions and mortality among older adults in East and Southeast Asia. Dr. Kaneda received her Master’s and Ph.D. in sociology from the University of North Carolina–Chapel Hill, where she was also a pre-doctoral trainee at the Carolina Population Center.

Dr. Syed Shah



Dr. Shah is a physician who specializes in community medicine. He is also a professor at the Institute of Public Health, College of Medicine and Health Sciences, United Arab Emirates University in Al Ain, UAE. He is conducting community-based cardiovascular disease prevention research in the United Arab Emirates and in low-income settings in Pakistan's Himalayan mountain populations. He has been selected as an emerging leader for NCD prevention by the World Heart Federation and as an NCD surveillance specialist for the Eastern Mediterranean Regional Office by the World Health Organization. His previous positions include assistant professor in the Department of Community Health Sciences at The Aga Khan University in Karachi, Pakistan; research scientist with the Safety and Health Assessment and Research for Prevention program for the state of Washington in the United States; and associate professor at the University of Saskatchewan College of Medicine in Canada. Dr. Shah earned his medical degree from Khyber Medical College in Peshawar, Pakistan, and his MPH in international health and Ph.D. in epidemiology from the School of Public Health at the University of Texas in the United States. He was selected for the Harvard Medical School Global Clinical Scholars Research Training Program and completed a year of advanced training in the methods and conduct of clinical trials.

Mr. Liam Sollis



Mr. Sollis is the public health policy and advocacy manager for Plan International UK. He leads the AstraZeneca Young Health Programme's policy, advocacy, and research, as well as Plan International UK's public engagement on adolescent health. Mr. Sollis previously served as a coordinator for Action for Global Health (AfGH) UK, a network of UK-based nongovernmental organizations working to improve the quality of global health policy and programming. He chaired AfGH's cross-European post-2015 taskforce, was a member of the Beyond 2015 UK steering committee, and sat on the Royal Society of Medicine's Global Health Advisory Board. Prior to this, Mr. Sollis worked for several years at the Overseas Development Institute in London. He holds a Master's from the London School of Economics.

Organizational Backgrounds

Population Reference Bureau (PRB) has been the leader in providing timely, objective information on population and health trends and their implications to audiences in the United States and around the world since 1929. PRB has a valuable, carefully sustained reputation for unbiased analysis and clear communication. PRB's print and electronic publications present the latest data and research results in language and formats that nonspecialists can understand and use, while still being true to the scientific basis of the material. PRB employs a full range of approaches to communicate information: award-winning websites; highly regarded print publications and reports; and policy briefs, fact sheets, data sheets, infographics, and multimedia presentations. PRB also trains others to communicate research results more effectively. For more information: www.prb.org.

The AstraZeneca Young Health Programme (YHP) is a disease prevention program with a unique focus on adolescents. It was founded in partnership with the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health and Plan International, with local NGO partners implementing YHP programs on the ground. The YHP mission is to positively impact the health of adolescents in marginalized communities worldwide through research, advocacy, and on-the-ground programs focused on NCD prevention. For more information: www.younghealthprogrammeyhp.com.



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