

Mobilizing Alberta Health Care Professionals to Prevent and Control Vascular Disease: A Call to ACTION on Tobacco Use, Diet and Physical Activity.

Slide 1

A coalition of health organizations, under the lead of the Cardiovascular Health & Stroke Strategic Clinical Network in Alberta Health Services, has formed to help transform the health care system to improve health and reduce disability from vascular diseases. ACTION (**A**lberta **C**oalition for **P**revention and **C**ontrol of vascular NCD (**ACTION**)) is a group including nurses, pharmacists, dietitians, family doctors and medical specialists working together with health related organizations, like the Heart and Stroke Foundation, to help inform all health care professionals and Albertans. This is a short summary of the ACTIONS recommended for health care professionals and their organizations to address unhealthy diets and lack of physical activity, and tobacco use.

Slide 2, 3, 4

The impact of common health risks causing death and disability in Canada have recently been estimated for 2010 by the Global Burden of Disease Study.

Vascular Risk Factor	Years of Life Lost	Years of Disability <i>(Disability Adjusted Life Years)</i>	Risk for Premature Death <i>Ranking</i>	Risk for Disability <i>Ranking</i>
Unhealthy Diet	864034	1047653	1st	1st
Inadequate Fruit and Vegetable Intake	405946	475120	1 st rank (Sub category)	1 st rank (Sub category)
Tobacco Use	754083	915628	2nd	2nd
Obesity	480352	794956	4th	3rd
Physical Inactivity	350125	443108	5th	5th

Unhealthy diet was the leading health risk in Canada with inadequate intake of fruit and vegetables the most significant contributor to diet risk. Tobacco products were estimated to be the 2nd leading risk for premature death and disability. Tobacco causes 30% of deaths from heart disease. Physical activity was the 5th leading risk for premature death and disability while obesity which is directly related to diet and physical activity was the 4th leading risk for premature death and the 3rd leading risk for disability. Increased blood pressure was within the other 5 leading risks and is largely related to unhealthy diet, inactivity and obesity. Clearly, to improve health and reduce death and disability, **ACTION** needs to be taken on these critical health risks.

Slide 5, 6

It is important to ensure Albertans understand the risks of unhealthy eating, lack of activity, and tobacco use and possess the personal skills to become active, eat healthy and quit using tobacco. Nevertheless, decades of experience and results of clinical trials show even with the best of counselling and support, most people are not able to make and sustain important healthy lifestyle changes. Decades of education has resulted in most Canadians being well informed, which has had some impact, but much more is needed. Global experience and best evidence demonstrates a need to create healthy environments through healthy public policies for a substantive impact. Healthy environments allow healthy choices to be the easy choices for people and often make unhealthy choice more difficult (e.g. expensive or time consuming). The types of health policies that are required are well outlined by the World Health Organization and many have been set as global and national goals by the United Nations.

Surveys conducted by the Government of Canada find high levels of support for many of the proposed healthy public policies.

Slide 7

The overwhelming burden of acute and chronic illness is likely enhanced because many health care professionals, and health care professional organizations, are not prioritizing advocacy actions for healthy public policies. Nevertheless, past experiences have shown that sustained and well organized advocacy by health care professionals and their organizations can have an impact. Efforts to reduce smoking, dietary trans fats and sodium have largely been lead by health care professionals and health organizations including charities with many large successes overtime. Smoking rates have had dramatic declines, there has been a marked reduction in dietary trans fats and a national target has been established for dietary sodium reduction. Even in the areas of success there is still much work to be done. **ACTION** believes that if all health care professionals in Alberta take up the challenge very substantive change could occur resulting in longer healthier lives for Albertans. Although **ACTION** is focussed on vascular diseases, it is supported by the Addictions & Mental Health, Obesity Diabetes & Nutrition, Cancer Care Strategic Clinical Networks as well as the Cardiovascular Health & Stroke Strategic Network of Alberta Health Services. Impacts of advocacy on reducing risks of vascular disease will impact other chronic diseases that share most of the same risk factors.

Overwhelmed by daily work generated largely by chronic and acute disease, disease practitioners are unable to prioritize upstream activities for prevention and health promotion. The lack of focus upstream results in more and more people with chronic and acute disease. **ACTION**, along with all healthcare professionals, are tasked with breaking this downward spiral and refocusing on prevention and health promotion.

Slide 8

The Alberta government has some excellent policies that could transform work places and schools into healthy eating and physical activity environments. Although strongly supported by the government, the policies are largely voluntary for daycares, schools, worksites and recreational centres so have not been widely implemented. If Alberta Health Care professionals were unified to create a strong lobby, and supported our patients and clients to advocate, it is very likely the corporate sector of Alberta and Alberta schools would respond. This would represent an excellent start towards a healthier Alberta.

Slide 9, 10, 11

ACTION calls on Alberta Health Care professionals and associated organizations to take steps in unison to promote change.

- Ensure fruit and vegetable intake, physical activity, body mass index and tobacco use are assessed as routine VITAL SIGNS
- Use the 'Healthy Living Prescription' to recommend increases in fruit and vegetable intake, physical activity and tobacco use cessation
 - Provide your patients/clients with **ACTION** advocacy resources to assisting them to advocate for healthy daycares, schools, worksites and recreational centres.
 - Support health report cards for daycares, schools, worksites and recreational centres
- Stop sedentary behavior and promote specific physical activity goals within your organization, work setting or educational environment by linking with already existing resources and getting informed (for great resources go to Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology)
<http://www.csep.ca/english/view.asp?x=804>
- Ensure organizations you belong to have policies to promote healthy eating and physical activity

Take personal and organizational **ACTION** to create a 'Healthy Alberta for Healthy Albertans'