



USE  TO BEAT 

Heart Awareness Month: September 2020

“Use heart” to beat cardiovascular disease and fight COVID-19

The Heart and Stroke Foundation South Africa (HSFSA) is embracing the World Heart Federation’s theme “Use heart to beat... cardiovascular disease”, extending the theme to “use heart...for you, your loved ones and all those who live in South Africa.”

Facts about cardiovascular disease

According to the World Health Organization (WHO) cardio-vascular disease (CVD) which includes heart disease and strokes, is the leading cause of death globally, claiming nearly 17, 9 million lives every year. In South Africa, heart disease and strokes have the second highest mortality rate, after TB, HIV and AIDS. In fact, in South Africa (SA) one (1) in every five (5) deaths are caused by CVD. Annually, in SA 82 000 lives are lost.

The key risk factors that drive the high mortality and morbidity for CVD include modifiable and non-modifiable factors. Non-modifiable factors include genetic make-up and predisposition for hypertension, increased cholesterol levels and other comorbid conditions, while modifiable factors include behavioural risk factors such as lack of physical activity, poor nutrition, tobacco

smoking and increased alcohol consumption. In SA, the high rate of increased blood pressure or hypertension is very disturbing as hypertension is known to be a “silent killer”. Less than 50% of South African adults living with hypertension, a key driver for CVD, are unaware of their condition. The prevalence of hypertension is estimated to be around 45% among adults. Similarly, South Africans are known to have a high cumulative risk score for CVD onset due to the fact that there is a high prevalence of obesity, tobacco smoking, and physical inactivity.

Given the burden of CVD in SA, Professor Pamela Naidoo, CEO of the HSFSA states that “by abiding by and adopting healthy behaviours and knowing your risk profile you will be able to prevent, to a large extent the risk of CVD onset. She continues to remind us that 80% of CVD is preventable through the adoption of healthy individual action”.

The HSFSA urges all South Africans to have a Health Risk Assessment (which includes checking their blood pressure, blood glucose, cholesterol levels, iron levels and weight). The HSFSA will be conducting selected HRAs in community and workplace settings. In addition, our long-standing partner, Dischem Pharmacies will be doing free HRAs during HAM and Stroke Week at all Dischem stores with in-house pharmacies. Prof Naidoo expresses her gratitude to Dischem Pharmacies for continuing to partner with the HSFSA to raise awareness of CVD and to mobilize communities to know their risk factors and encouraging community members to seek access to health care especially if medical treatment is required.

What does the HSFSA have planned for Heart Awareness Month ?

During Heart Awareness Month (HAM) the HSFSA will be focusing on four core themes, dedicating a week to each theme. In week 1 the focus is on *Heart disease, COVID-19 and co-morbidities*, in week 2 the focus is *Nutrition, heart health and building immunity*, in week 3 the focus is on *Tobacco smoking, alcohol consumption and CVD*, and in week 4 the focus is on *Health Care Practitioners and Allied Health Workers*. HAM culminates on World Heart Day (WHD) on 29th September 2020 where we urge all South Africans to use their hearts to... make healthier choices and prevent heart disease.

Heart Awareness Campaigns with key stakeholders

Look out for exciting joint campaigns with a few of our key stakeholders during HAM: UCT, SA Heart, African Heart Network, Philips’s Foundation, The Marine Stewardship Council (MSC), Lucky Star, Willowton, Joekels Tea, and our anti-tobacco alliance partners. Please visit our website

(www.heartfoundation.co.za), social pages and other media to learn more about our initiatives for HAM and World Heart Day.

In addition, do attend our weekly webinars, detailed below, which is aligned with our thematic approach.

A Thematic Approach to HAM:

Week 1: Heart disease, COVID-19 and co-morbidities

Patients with pre-existing conditions, such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, obesity and respiratory diseases have heightened vulnerability to develop Covid-19 and tend to have more severe diseases with worse clinical outcome. These patients are therefore faced with a double-edged threat. Not only are they more at risk of developing severe forms of the virus, but they may also be afraid to seek ongoing care for their hearts. The HSFSA urges all South Africans to live a heart healthy life and for those with comorbidities to continue with their medication and attend regular medical check-ups.

Webinar Topic: COVID-19 and the Cardiovascular Patient - A Practical Approach

Thursday, 3 September, from 18:00 to 19:30

Week 2: Nutrition, heart health and building immunity

Good nutrition is essential to protect your heart. In addition, you can help support your immune system by including important nutrients in your overall eating plan on a regular basis. Up to 80% of heart disease and strokes can be prevented by simply living a healthy lifestyle that includes healthy eating. Eating well and making good nutritional choices helps to fight heart disease and boost your immune system. Unhealthy lifestyle choices and chronic diseases like heart disease can lead to persistent low levels of inflammation. This abnormal response suppresses the functioning of the immune system.

Webinar Topic: Nutrition, heart health and building immunity

Thursday, 10 September 2020, from 14:00 to 15:30

Week 3: Tobacco smoking, alcohol consumption and CVD

Tobacco kills more than 8 million people globally every year. More than 7 million of these deaths are from direct tobacco use and around 1.2 million are due to non-smokers being exposed to

second-hand smoke and also vaping. Tobacco smoking is a major risk factor for CVD and a cause of every four CVD deaths globally. In addition, alcohol consumption contributes to 3 million deaths each year globally as well as to the disabilities and poor health of millions of people. Overall, harmful use of alcohol is responsible for 5.1% of the global burden of disease. Alcohol is the leading risk factor for premature mortality and disability among those aged 15 to 49 years, accounting for 10 percent of all deaths in this age group.

Webinar Topic: Tobacco Control and Cardiovascular Disease

Thursday, 17 September 2020, from 17:00 to 18:30

Week 4: The Role of Health Care Practitioners and Allied Health Workers

The COVID-19 pandemic is testing all of us, but our Healthcare and other essential services workers are the frontlines and the pandemic only highlights and elevates the central role they serve in healthcare.

Healthcare Professionals treat patients of all ages and high risk population groups, such as people living with Cardiovascular (CVD) and strokes, diabetes, hypertension and severe obesity. Having CVD and other medical conditions increases the risk of becoming infected with the coronavirus.

Since the pandemic, many healthcare professionals and essential services workers have contracted the virus and it is a time of great stress and uncertainty. Those leading the fight against COVID-19 must support both patients and the healthcare and essential services workforce, ensuring risk to the workforce is minimized and they receive much needed mental and physical support. Government and the business sectors' key objective is to ensure there is a consistent supply of critical personal protective equipment to protect healthcare workers who are working tirelessly to ensure the public remains safe during this pandemic.

Webinar Topic: Health Care Professionals, Cardio-vascular Disease and COVID-19

Please check our web-site for details: www.heartfoundation.co.za

Use Heart To Beat...

During Heart Awareness Month, the HSFSA will focus on behavioural factors which have a major impact on one's risk for developing heart disease. The HSFSA, together with key partners from African Heart Network, Campaign For Tobacco-Free Kids and SA Heart will be involved in webinars aligned with the World Heart Federation mission and vision to bring to South Africa's attention that we can work together to reduce the burden of heart disease. We will light up iconic landmarks on World Heart Day (WHD) as we drive the global goal of reducing premature deaths from CVD by 25% by the year 2025.

For updates on our Heart Awareness Month webinars, please visit our social media platforms and website for regular updates www.heartfoundation.co.za or call 021-422 1586.

End

Interviews will be conducted with our CEO, Prof Pamela Naidoo, Health Promotion Officers, dietitians and other relevant experts. To co-ordinate and confirm interview dates you are welcome to contact the Public Relations and Communications Department on 021 422 1586 or

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About the Heart and Stroke Foundation SA

The Heart and Stroke Foundation South Africa (HSFSA) plays a leading role in the fight against preventable heart disease and stroke, with the aim of seeing fewer people in South Africa suffer premature deaths and disabilities. The HSFSA, established in 1980 is a non-governmental, non-profit organization which relies on external funding to sustain the work it carries out.

The HSFSA aims to reduce the cardiovascular disease (CVD) burden in South Africa and ultimately on the health care system of South Africa. Our mission is to empower people in South Africa to adopt healthy lifestyles, make healthy choices easier, seek appropriate care and encourage prevention.

For more information visit www.heartfoundation.co.za. You can also find us on www.facebook.com/HeartStrokeSA and www.twitter.com/SAHeartStroke

