Medtronic News

Medtronic Foundation Supports New Initiative to Develop National Plans Addressing Noncommunicable Diseases (NCDS)

Grant to Partners In Health creates a program within the Rwandan Ministry of Health to provide planning assistance to six low-income countries in order to improve access to NCD care

MINNEAPOLIS--(BUSINESS WIRE)--May. 23, 2012-- In a continued commitment to help reduce the global burden of noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) such as cardiovascular disease and diabetes, the Medtronic Foundation is making a $435,000 grant to Partners in Health (PIH) to work with the Rwandan Ministry of Health to establish a team of NCD experts that will assist low-income countries in preparing National NCD Plans by 2013, a goal set by the United Nations following the 2011 High-Level Meeting on NCDs.

The effort will build on a successful model of NCD care integration developed by the Rwandan Ministry of Health together with PIH and other partners. Rwanda is a leader in health sector planning, having developed a number of novel initiatives, including a community-based mutual health insurance program, universal access to antiretroviral therapy for HIV/AIDS, performance-based financing, and eHealth. These efforts have made Rwanda the only country in Africa on track to achieve the health-related Millennium Development Goals, and an experienced leader among other low- to middle-income countries.

“The next generation of global solidarity must be more strategic, more efficient, and more country-driven,” says Dr. Agnes Binagwaho, Minister of Health of Rwanda. “We have much work to do in creating a future in which the greatest risk factor for dying of a noncommunicable disease is not where one is born.”

Worldwide, an estimated 36 million people died from NCDs in 2008, nearly 80 percent of them living in low- and middle-income countries.

“There is no reason that poorer nations can’t address these health burdens. But they will need all kinds of support,” says Dr. Paul Farmer, PIH co-founder and chief strategist. “We hope that Rwanda can offer a starting point, help develop blueprints for fulfilling an essential part of a fundamental human right.”

In the first year, the team, called the NCD Synergies Unit, will work with two low-income African countries, with plans to add four more countries in the second year, including two non-African countries. Countries will be selected through an application process.

The team will work closely with ministries of health in partner countries, establishing a technical assistance curriculum, creating an online clearinghouse of tools for NCD planning and integration, and convening once a year to share best practices.

“Coming out of the U.N. High-Level Meeting, we knew that developing National NCD Plans would be challenging for some countries,” said Dr. Jacob Gayle, vice president of Medtronic community affairs and executive director of the Medtronic Foundation. “We hope by making this network of experts and resources more readily available, we fill a real need in the global effort to address NCDs and strengthen health systems.”

With noncommunicable diseases accounting for more than 60 percent of all deaths worldwide, U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon called upon the world's businesses to help address NCDs, which are expected to increase by 50 percent in developing countries by 2030. NCDs account for roughly 75 percent of healthcare costs in both advanced and developing economies, according to the World Economic Forum.

Since 2010, the Medtronic Foundation has committed more than $7.5 million in NCD-related grants. In Rwanda, the Foundation has supported Partners in Health since 2009 as they closely worked with the Rwandan Ministry of Health on the integration of

NCD care into the existing care system.

ABOUT THE MEDTRONIC FOUNDATION

The Medtronic Foundation is committed to improving the lives of people around the world living with chronic disease. Its grant making is focused in three areas: health, education and community.

ABOUT MEDTRONIC

Medtronic, Inc. (www.medtronic.com), headquartered in Minneapolis, is the global leader in medical technology – alleviating pain, restoring health and extending life for millions of people around the world.

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