



## **Prevention and Control of Non-Communicable Diseases in Iran: A Window of Opportunity for Policymakers**

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### **Dear Editor in Chief**

Non-communicable diseases (NCDs) are the most common causes of mortality worldwide in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (1-4). More than 36 million people die annually due to NCDs, that almost 80% of these deaths occur in developing countries (lower- and middle-income countries) (5, 6). Hence, the World Health Organization (WHO) in 2005 proposed a strategy for control and prevention of NCDs which offers the health community a new global goal: to reduce death rates from all chronic diseases by 2% per year over and above existing trends during the next 10 years (1, 7).

According to the latest estimates of the WHO, countries are expected to lose considerable amounts of national income as a result of NCDs negative impact on labor supplies and a reduction in gross domestic production (GDP). According to the same report in 2005, estimated losses resulting from heart disease, stroke and diabetes in national income has been calculated 18 billion international dollars in China, 11 billion in Russia, 9 billion in India and 3 billion in Brazil's. Also, loses for the countries of the United Kingdom, Pakistan, Canada, Nigeria and Tanzania were also 1.6, 1.2, 0.5, 0.4 and 0.1 billion, respectively (8).

Most of the developed countries have focused comprehensively on the importance and financial burden of NCDs. While in developing countries

the issue is not addressed properly and policy makers have not paid enough attention to it (9). Like other developing countries, Iran suffers from the great burden of the NCDs and according to the report of WHO, from the 395,000 deaths that occur in Iran, approximately 76% of them have been devoted to NCDs (10). Thus, Iran has been undergoing a great economic cost and burden of NCDs.

In recent years in Iran, the new efforts have taken place to prevention and control of the NCDs at the micro level, but serious attention at the macro level has not been paid to this matter. But after the new Government in Iran in 2013, the health sector was raised as one of the new Government's priorities and became to the main priority for government politicians. Therefore, according to the circumstances contained in Iran and changing the perspectives of government politicians on the health, health policymakers have very leading appropriate window of opportunity so that they can in order to promote public health and decrease the burden of NCDs, execute the following policies:

1. Informing the authorities about the social and economic burden of the NCDs,

2. Revision in the health care services in order to integrate the prevention and control programs of the NCDs in the primary health care network levels,
3. Using the professional and qualified people in order to revise the primary health care network,
4. Community notification about the importance of prevention and control the NCDs,
5. Develop a comprehensive strategy for communication media to targeted prevention of the NCDs,
6. Implementation of the information system in order to systematic monitoring on collection statistics about on screened and followed cases of high risk individuals,
7. Execution of systematic program for education to the patients with NCDs in triple levels of the service providing,
8. Develop a program to prevent the activity of the institutions and companies that are effective in the field of disease outbreak the NCDs,
9. Comprehensive promotion and support from self-care program in community-level,
10. Using the private sector to set up family counseling centers in order to prevention and control the NCDs,
11. Having inter-sectoral approach for all policies and programs to the prevention and control of NCDs.

Therefore, this is a very proper opportunity to the health section at this period of time to acquire its original position after many years and the role of health policy-makers for this matter is very important.

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