

Prevent premature deaths from heart failure, urges the Heart Failure Association

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The Heart Failure Association (HFA) of the European Society of Cardiology (ESC) is calling for global policy change relating to heart failure. An international white paper, Heart failure: preventing disease and death worldwide, will be presented at an endorsement event on 16 May 2014 in Athens, Greece, immediately before the Heart Failure 2014 Congress.

Approximately 15 million people are living with [heart failure](#) in Europe,¹ and 26 million worldwide.² The outlook is poor: [survival rates](#) are worse than those for bowel, breast or [prostate cancer](#), and the illness imposes a huge burden on patients, [caregivers](#) and healthcare systems. Heart failure accounts for around 1–2% of the total healthcare budget in developed countries.³ In Germany alone, the total medical costs attributable to the disease were nearly €3 billion in 2006.³ In the coming decades, the global rise of ageing populations and detrimental lifestyle changes could more than double the demands on healthcare systems in some countries.⁴ This represents a burgeoning health and economic crisis which must be addressed.

Awareness of the disease is alarmingly poor among the general public and healthcare professionals alike, resulting in many unnecessary premature deaths. "Although there is no cure, heart failure can be prevented, and most patients can be treated effectively to improve quality of life and survival," stressed Professor Stefan Anker, President of the HFA. "People need to recognise the symptoms of heart failure to help increase the opportunities for prevention," added Professor Piotr

Ponikowski, Past President of the HFA. "Policy initiatives that prioritise heart failure prevention and champion equity of care for all would ease the strain on global healthcare systems and improve outcomes for patients."

Heart failure: preventing disease and death worldwide has been developed as part of the Global Heart Failure Awareness Programme initiated by the HFA of the ESC. Written by a distinguished author group led by Professor Piotr Ponikowski (Wrocław, Poland) and including Professor Stefan Anker (Berlin, Germany) and Professor Gerasimos Filippatos (Athens, Greece), it will be presented at an endorsement event on 16 May 2014 in Athens. Its aim is to raise awareness of heart failure across Europe and beyond. "It is a great pleasure to host this auspicious international event," stated Professor Filippatos, Heart Failure 2014 Scientific Chairperson and HFA President-Elect. "Here in Greece, there is substantial power to improve national health by increasing public awareness of heart failure and encouraging the type of healthy lifestyle that reduces risk."

The white paper examines the worldwide burden of heart failure and highlights the challenges of dealing with the disease, with a clear Call

to Action for policy-makers. The evidence-based recommendations for policy change include:

1. Promoting heart failure prevention through public awareness programmes.
2. Improving heart failure awareness among healthcare professionals through the use of programmes to increase knowledge about the prevention, diagnosis, treatment and long-term management of heart failure.

3. Ensuring equity of care for all patients with heart failure.
4. Supporting and empowering patients and their caregivers to engage proactively in long-term care.
5. Promoting heart failure research.

Implementation of such initiatives at local, national and international levels has the potential to reduce deaths from heart failure and to improve quality of life for patients worldwide.

The white paper is a core component of the Global Heart Failure Awareness Programme of the HFA.

More information: 1. Dickstein K et al. Eur J Heart Fail 2008;10:933-89. [DOI: 10.1016/j.ejheart.2008.08.005](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ejheart.2008.08.005)

2. Ambrosy AP et al. J Am Coll Cardiol 2014;63:1123. [DOI: 10.1016/j.jacc.2013.11.053](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jacc.2013.11.053)

3. Neumann T et al. Dtsch Arztebl Int 2009;106:269. [DOI: 10.3238/arztebl.2009.0269](https://doi.org/10.3238/arztebl.2009.0269)

4. Heidenreich PA et al. Circ Heart Fail 2013;6:606. [DOI: 10.1161/HHF.0b013e318291329a](https://doi.org/10.1161/HHF.0b013e318291329a)

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