

## EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN DECLARATION ON EPILEPSY

Under the aegis of the Global Campaign Against Epilepsy of the World Health Organization (WHO), International League against Epilepsy (ILAE) and International Bureau for Epilepsy (IBE), a meeting "Epilepsy as A Public Health Concern in the Eastern Mediterranean Region" was held in Cairo, Egypt, on 3 and 4 March 2003. Professionals from Health and Social Sciences sectors and representatives from universities coming from the member states of the Eastern Mediterranean Region unanimously agreed to the following Declaration:

### CONSIDERING THAT:

- epilepsy is the most common serious chronic brain disorder, estimated to affect at least 50 million people in the world of which at least 4 million live in the Eastern Mediterranean Region,
- contrary to many misconceptions, epilepsy is a brain disorder with natural causes and requiring medical treatment,
- it is often not realised that epilepsy is treatable, and that most people with epilepsy can lead productive lives as a result of relatively inexpensive, cost-effective treatment,
- in parts of the Eastern Mediterranean Region many people, especially in rural areas, have no access to appropriate healthcare provisions and treatment,
- general information about epilepsy, trained expertise, diagnostic facilities, antiepileptic drugs and surgery are not available for or affordable by many people with epilepsy, for geographic, financial, cultural or communication reasons,
- epilepsy has serious physical, psychological and social consequences for the afflicted and their families,
- the impact of epilepsy is most severe in children and adolescents,
- epilepsy does not receive adequate attention in existing national health plans in many countries,

We call on the governments of the member states of the Eastern Mediterranean Region, national and regional, public and private organisations, all health care providers, and the general public to join us in taking strong and decisive action to meet the objectives of the Global Campaign Against Epilepsy of the WHO/ILAE/IBE "Epilepsy: Out of the Shadows".

Specifically we urge action to:

- address the needs with respect to epilepsy in terms of prevention, access to trained personnel, modern diagnostic equipment, antiepileptic medication, surgical treatment where necessary, and social integration,
- include antiepileptic drugs in the list of essential drugs in all countries, and make them constantly available to avoid the serious consequences of treatment interruptions,
- educate and train health care and other relevant professionals and volunteers on all levels of health care about epilepsy,
- educate those affected by epilepsy, their families and the general public about epilepsy as a universal neurological condition, to eradicate misconceptions, and empower the affected to seek appropriate treatment and improve their quality of life,

- eliminate discrimination in all spheres of life, particularly concerning school and employment,
- encourage the public and private sectors and NGO's to get involved in the local activities of the Global Campaign against Epilepsy,
- encourage basic and applied research on epilepsy as an integral part of epilepsy services on all levels,
- proclaim a National Epilepsy Day,
- encourage regional and continental co-operation.

CAIRO,  
March 04, 2003