

Although there is debate about the estimated health burden of rabies, the estimates of direct mortality and the DALYs due to rabies are among the highest of the neglected tropical diseases. Poor surveillance, underreporting in many developing countries, frequent misdiagnosis of rabies, and an absence of coordination among all the sectors involved are likely to lead to underestimation of the scale of the disease. It is clear, however, that rabies disproportionately affects poor rural communities, and particularly children. Most of the expenditure for post-exposure prophylaxis is borne by those who can least afford it. As a result of growing dog and human populations, the burden of human deaths from rabies and the economic costs will continue to escalate in the absence of concerted efforts and investment for control.

Since the first WHO Expert Consultation on Rabies in 2004, WHO and its network of collaborating centres on rabies, specialized national institutions, members of the WHO Expert Advisory Panel on Rabies and partners such as the Gates Foundation, the Global Alliance for Rabies Control and the Partnership for Rabies Prevention, have been advocating the feasibility of rabies elimination regionally and globally and promoting research into sustainable cost-effective strategies. Those joint efforts have begun to break the cycle of rabies neglect, and rabies is becoming recognized as a priority for investment.

This Consultation concluded that human dog-transmitted rabies is readily amenable to control, regional elimination in the medium term and even global elimination in the long term. A resolution on major neglected tropical diseases, including rabies, presented for submission to the World Health Assembly in May 2013 aims at securing Member States' commitment to the control, elimination or eradication of these diseases. Endorsement of the resolution would open the door for exciting advances in rabies prevention and control.

WHO Expert Consultation on Rabies

Second report



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Weekly Epidemiological Record, 2010, 85: 309-320

WHO Expert Consultation on Rabies. First report.

Geneva, World Health Organization, 2005

WHO Technical Report Series, No. 931

WHO Expert Committee on Rabies. Eighth report.

Geneva, World Health Organization, 1992

WHO Technical Report Series, No. 824

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