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PRIORITY AREAS IDENTIFIED BY THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION FOR ADDRESSING NON-COMMUNICABLE DISEASES IN THE AFRICAN REGION

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INTRODUCTION

The World Health Organization (WHO) AFRO region has major inequalities in health, due to inadequate health systems across Member States, despite an increase in total health expenditure.

The WHO AFRO regional office has taken steps to provide countries with support to help identify and plan key interventions that will strengthen health systems towards the attainment of Universal Health Coverage and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The WHO Regional Committee for Africa elaborated a comprehensive framework of actions to guide Member States and aim to generate concise policy briefs that will consolidate the best available evidence that addresses questions which decision makers find pertinent.

Cochrane South Africa (SA) was tasked with using available systematic reviews for non-communicable diseases (NCDs) and other key priority areas, to produce evidence summaries.

METHODOLOGY

The WHO provided a list of pertinent topics that were deemed urgent in need of response for meeting the SDGs. These topics were then developed into questions based on the PICO format.

The Cochrane SA team performed comprehensive database searches to find systematic reviews that addressed these topics. Reviews were then listed in order of priority based on an algorithm developed by the Cochrane SA team. Translating the key evidence from relevant systematic reviews was undertaken using the WHO-provided evidence template.

RESULTS

Priority areas were derived around the key focus topics that were provided by the WHO and 36 evidence summaries were prepared from systematic reviews. Priority NCD areas were; the following:

- Multisectoral approach in tackling NCDs
- Countering interference from tobacco industry
- Promoting physical activity
- Promoting healthy diet
- Improving screening and treatment of hypertension
- Improving screening and treatment of diabetes
- Preventing cervical cancer
- Preventing lung cancer
- Raising awareness on new and novel tobacco products
- Preventing dementia

AIM

To respond to priority questions from WHO-AFRO and translate key evidence from systematic reviews to produce policy briefs for the African region that addresses questions which decision makers find pertinent.

CONCLUSION

Policy briefs based on evidence summaries prepared by Cochrane SA responding to questions from AFRO stakeholders, will be developed by WHO policymakers. These policy briefs will help shape future health strategies to achieve the SDGs.

