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Ministerial conference on diabetes 2018: Invigorating global fight against diabetes

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The two-day event saw more than 300 international and local delegates from 18 countries and regions gather to discuss the pressing global health issue and rising burden of diabetes.



Singapore – The first day of the inaugural international Ministerial Conference on Diabetes organised by the Ministry of Health, Singapore saw more than 300 international and local delegates from 18 countries and regions gather to discuss the pressing global health issue and rising burden of diabetes.

Diabetes has become the biggest epidemic of the 21st century, and is the seventh leading cause of death globally. The number of people with diabetes has nearly quadrupled from 108 million in 1980 to 422 million in 2014. Globally, 425 million adults lived with the condition in 2017 and this number is expected to rise to around 629 million, or one in ten adults by 20452.

Changing mindsets and forging collaboration to beat diabetes

In his opening address, Mr Tharman Shanmugaratnam, Singapore's Deputy Prime

Minister (DPM) and Coordinating Minister for Economic and Social Policies, emphasised the need for a collective effort to tackle diabetes to avoid significant cost in lives and national well-being everywhere.

Driving innovation and partnerships to transform health care systems

There is a need to intensify efforts in the prevention and management of diabetes, but it cannot be business as usual. Novel approaches are required to tackle diabetes, said Dr. Axelrod.

Digitalisation coupled with the increase in smartphone and internet penetration will be key to transforming health care. There have been great advancements in telemedicine, telematics and e-health systems – from the usage of smart devices with artificial intelligence capabilities, to private communication with doctors through blockchain technology, to the creation of "digital twins" to help doctors remotely care for patients.

At the Ministerial Roundtable held on the second day of the Ministerial Conference on Diabetes, the Health Ministers and senior government representatives affirmed their commitment to enhance innovation and strengthen international partnerships and collaborations with key stakeholders, so as to foster a supportive environment that encourages citizens to take active steps towards preventing and managing diabetes.

Beyond political commitment by governments to tackle diabetes, the Ministerial Roundtable agreed that a holistic response to address the plethora of challenges in diabetes prevention and management requires sustainable financing mechanisms, innovative approaches and bold health system reforms.

Key Discussions at the Ministerial Roundtable

1. **Leveraging innovation approaches**
2. **Social Mobilisation**
3. **Fostering Better Cooperation with Key Stakeholders**

In his closing remarks, Minister for Health, Mr Gan Kim Yong, urged delegates to take a bold approach in the global fight against diabetes. He highlighted the need for:

- **Decisive action** to move swiftly and adopt innovative approaches tohelp improve care, reduce costs and bring about reforms to transform care for citizens;
- **Inclusivity** to involve and engage the community, especially vulnerablegroups in the society, to strengthen the sustainability of health programmes and reach out to those who need them; and
- **Open collaboration** within and beyond national boundaries, as public-private partnerships can produce synergistic effects in improving population health outcomes.

Singapore will consolidate the findings and key learnings of the Conference into a summary report, which will be made publicly available for governments' reference in our continuous fights against diabetes and other non-communicable diseases .