

IN CONVERSATION WITH

Shelly Chadha

World Hearing Day 2018

This year's theme for World Hearing Day 2018 on the 3 March is discussed by **Shelly Chadha**, of WHO. She explains the importance of the event and how every hearing care professional can get involved and contribute to the growing efforts to curb hearing loss across the globe, and support those affected by hearing loss.



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Tell us about World Hearing Day 2018. What is the main message this year?

World Hearing Day 2018 is being observed with the theme 'Hear the future'. The number of people with hearing loss is expected to grow substantially in the coming decades. The theme highlights this anticipated rise and draws attention to the main causes that contribute to it. It also proposes actions that individuals, health providers, governments and civil society must take to prevent and address hearing loss.

What do you think are the challenges that hearing and ear care face in high income countries compared to LMIC?

Most of the lower- and middle-income countries continue to face issues such as ear infections, infectious diseases, noise, and the use of ototoxic medicines. They lack adequate

services and sufficient human resources to address the needs of people with ear and hearing problems. High-income countries, on the other hand face the challenge created by the ongoing demographic shift as well as continued high cost of services.

How can hearing and ear care professionals get involved?

Ear and hearing care professionals across the world can:

- Participate in the event by organising activities such as awareness sessions, service camps and other activities. They can lobby with policymakers, involve NGOs, motivate other professionals and inform the community about aspects of hearing loss and hearing care which are most relevant in their own settings.
- Share their plans and activity reports with WHO.
- Register by sending an email to WHOPBD@who.int. This will ensure that they receive WHO updates and surveys, as from time to time WHO seeks feedback on the World Hearing Day theme, materials and organisation. We request all interested professionals and groups to kindly provide their feedback and constructive inputs, which can help us to improve the annual event in coming years.
- Volunteer their time, ideas and expertise to WHO, as this is something we welcome and encourage.

What has been the event's most significant achievement so far?

World Hearing Day is helping us to raise awareness of various aspects of hearing loss. This is evident by the increasing number of countries that have participated with a variety of activities organised at governmental, nongovernmental and community level.

In 2015, World Hearing Day was observed with the

theme, 'Make Listening Safe'. This resulted in the launch of an initiative, which is now a global movement to promote safe listening and reduce hearing loss attributable to unsafe listening practices.

What for you will constitute a successful event in 2018?

I believe that the World Hearing Day campaign is a tool for driving change in countries and communities through raised awareness, service provision and policy formulation. If activities held on World Hearing Day can serve to provide care to people, who would otherwise not have received it, it would make our efforts worthwhile.

In addition, if the World Hearing Day messages can lead to resource allocation for hearing care in a few countries, that would be an achievement which could change the lives of many more.

What aspects of World Hearing Day are you most proud of?

Over the last five years, as we have developed this day, efforts have been made to follow a consultative approach and improve the campaigns each year based on feedback received from partners and countries. This approach has been challenging as well as rewarding, and is an aspect that we at WHO are proud of.

What are the big challenges involved with an event of this kind? And what are you hoping to improve on for 2018?

It is always challenging to develop a theme that can speak to the vast majority of stakeholders and reflect different perspectives. Advocacy efforts in the field of hearing are also often limited by the lack of data and research, especially from Low- and middle-income countries.

In coming years we will continue our advocacy efforts and try to improve the campaign in order to make it relevant to as many stakeholders as possible. This shall be done following the same consultative and collaborative approach as before.



Make Listening Safe