



Renaming the NCD's - Letter to the Editor

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Letter to the Editor

It is with interest and pleasure that I see notices of meetings and symposia, and articles, devoted to the theme non communicable disease. I still live in the economic and geographical 'South' but the concern arises from the continued use of terminology that dulls the senses to the urgency of the problems involved. Since I wrote the letter [1] the epidemic of the so called 'non' communicable disease has increased greatly; obesity, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, cancers, accidental trauma, road deaths etc, and there is still less research and action about breaking the methods of spread than there is about the illnesses. I have since and before 2002 argued all over about the danger of calling these non communicable and argued that we should use the word neo-communicable instead to give a greater sense of urgency. 'Non' induces a feeling of inertia! I have also long argued that now there are even more new vectors conveying pathogenic influences to the mind and body and turning them into behaviors and disease without the need for insect vectors! These are the electronic (radio and television, the internet) and print media, social media, advertising and peer pressure across nations. There are now more subtle and sophisticated methods of using communication with high-pressure presentation and advertising techniques to force compliant behavior by readers, whether the ordinary public, children, or potential consumers. As indicated earlier in this note there is now acceptance of the dangers of the so-called non communicable diseases and the effect of lifestyle on them (and others such as diabetes, most malignancy, accidental and non accidental trauma, and the consequences of family breakup).

The concern I have is that the urgency that needs to pervade this subject is still not there. It took nearly 60 years for the dangers of Tobacco use in smoking to be adequately recognized and ACTED UPON. I think the name 'NON'-dulls us. I suggest and plead that now the words 'non communicable' are consigned to history or a very small bit of the present, and that the name NEOCOMMUNICABLE is used for the bulk of the conditions under consideration This does not even involve a change in the acronym (NCD can be used though NeoCD would be better) but will subconsciously instil a sense of urgency. I hope that this letter may instigate debate on this matter outside lay and advertising, and medical circles and schools and anywhere else that may help force the issue.

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