The Health Impact of Abuse

October is domestic violence and bullying awareness month. Violence is directly related to one’s health. In the US, a study of low-income pre-school children in Michigan found that nearly half (46.7%) of the children in the study had been exposed to at least one incident of mild or severe violence in the family. Another study shows that fifty percent (50%) of men who frequently assault their wives frequently assault their children also, and the U.S. Advisory Board on Child Abuse and Neglect suggests that domestic violence is likely the single major precursor to child abuse and neglect fatalities. In the United States, an important group of studies shows the link between adverse childhood experiences (ACE) such as abuse, neglect, and witnessed abuse, to negative physical and mental health outcomes later in adulthood. Compared to kids with no abuse history, kids exposed to abuse had higher risk for:

- cardiovascular disease,
- type 2 diabetes
- dysregulated immune system
- substance abuse
- depression
- cancer
- obesity
- overweight
- premature mortality

Also noted in US studies were changes in brain structure, such as evidence of smaller frontal lobes, negative psychological consequences and poor mental health outcomes which further influence the body’s stress load, impacting the physical health and quality of life of the trauma survivor. Victims and child witnesses of violence often experience fear, shame, guilt, and stigma. These negative emotions contribute to severe burdens of mental and emotional problems, particularly depression and post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) as noted above.

Witnessed abuse is considered by some as serious as child abuse. Certainly, the physical and mental health consequences do testify to that. Children who witness domestic violence are more likely to exhibit behavioral and physical health problems including:

- depression
- anxiety
- suicide attempts
- drug and alcohol abuse
- posttraumatic stress disorder (such as bed-wetting or nightmares)
- allergies
- asthma
- gastrointestinal problems
- headache
- flu

The above health consequences offer strong evidence that violence is a serious public health problem. Prevention strategies and the development of protective factors can have a positive impact to reduce these health consequences. As a church we must do our part to get leaders trained and families helped in order to prevent and reverse this problem. Helping families and individuals strengthen protective factors in line with their faith and values can go long way to reduce the negative impact of abuse.

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• **Adventists InStep for Life** is a Division wide health initiative. The website provides information and resources on how your church, school, or healthcare organization can become involved. Motivate yourself, your family and your church to register and report miles of physical activity. Consider volunteering to be your church, school, or hospital coordinator so you can report miles for others. You can watch previous webinars explaining the initiative or register for upcoming webinars (next one on October 15 will focus on Let’s Move Day reporting) at www.adventistsinstepforlife.org.

• **Adventists InStep for Life Mobile Apps** are available for download for android and iPhone users. You must first register at the website listed above then download the app (INSTEP or ADVENTIST INSTEP), and start recording your physical activity right on your phone.

• **Stop bullying now** This month, groups across the country committed to stop bullying will release new resources, campaigns, and efforts aimed at bringing awareness to this important issue facing our youth. This month serves as a reminder that bullying prevention must be addressed, and one way to accomplish this is through educating ourselves, our communities and the youth in our lives. Go to www.stopbullying.gov.

• **Pathfinder’s InStep for Life $1000 award** Get your club to report your miles for InStep for Life and compete for $1000 awards which will be awarded for top clubs for maximum participation rates and miles. Miles can reported from Jan 1-Dec 31, 2013. More awards will be given at Oshkosh during the 3-day http://healthfinder.gov/nho/SeptemberToolkit.aspx.

• **Domestic violence awareness month** One type of abuse in the home is child abuse and neglect. This is affecting the health and wellbeing of children and families involved. Download an infographic with helpful information at http://iom.edu/Reports/2013/New-Directions-in-Child-Abuse-and-Neglect-Research/Child-Abuse-Infographic.aspx. A danger assessment for people suffering from DM can be found at www.dangerassessment.org or download an app www.loveisrespect.org.

• **Advertise your health program for free**: The NAD has developed a website with listings of health programs for the public. Anyone can advertise their health outreach program in any city or state in the NAD and use the free online registration system that allows you to know ahead of time who will attend along with their contact info. The site is www.ChooseFullLife.org. To advertise your event, simply send information with name and contact info for coordinator, location, time and description of event. If you wish to use our registration system so people can print an entrance ticket, please send us how many seats you have available. The info may be sent to NADHM@nad.adventist.org or click on ‘contact us’ at the website.

• **Health Calendar Emphasis -OCTOBER**
  - USA: http://www.healthfinder.gov/nho/nho.asp#m8

  **September 2013**
  - Domestic Violence Awareness Month (US)
  - Bullying Prevention awareness month (US)
  - Breast Cancer Awareness Month (Canada and US)
  - 10 - World Mental Health Day
  - 6-12 Mental Illness Awareness Week (US and Canada)
  - 14 - 18 National Health Education Week (US)
  - 16- World Food Day

  **Looking Forward (November 2013)**
  - Diabetes Month (US and Canada)
  - COPD Awareness Month (US)
  - Lung Cancer Awareness Month (US and Canada)
  - Osteoporosis Month (Canada)
  - National Alzheimer’s Disease Awareness Month (US and Canada)
  - 14 – World Diabetes Day
  - 23 - International Survivors of Suicide Day (US)
On September 22 thousands of people across the NAD held Let’s Move Days in churches, schools, and communities. The flagship event was held at Indianapolis, in preparation for the evangelistic efforts of 2014. Nearly 1000 attended the 5K fun run/walk. Health and Human Services and local officials representative attended the fun filled event.

NORTH AMERICAN DIVISION

ATLANTIC UNION

Pr Leroy Daley and the NEC team getting moving

CHURCH IN CANADA

Schools and Conference Office having fun on LMD

COLUMBIA UNION

Kettering Ohio and Richmond VA represented here on LMD

MID-AMERICA UNION

South-Dakota SDA Church in Dakota Conference enjoy a picnic and walking

LAKE UNION

Michigan Conference Health Directors and office personal enjoy a walk on LMD

NORTH PACIFIC UNION

NPUC Office enjoys a fun LMD

PACIFIC UNION

Calistoga SDA Church and Silicon Valley SDA Church take part on LMD

SOUTHERN UNION

Appopka SDA Church in FL, and Lenoir city SDA Church getting moving

SOUTHWESTERN UNION

El Paso SDA Church hold a fun 5K to get El Paso on the move
Focus on what is TRUE and worthy of PRAISE, cultivating FORGIVENESS and a spirit of GRATITUDE

Facts with Hope

**FACT** A review of research literature supports the concept that forgiveness helps us to live longer. But a study last year found that forgiveness of self by physical therapy patients from the Appalachia area was associated with better physical, mental and overall health status, as well as current and chronic pain.

**HOPE** The Bible is silent when it comes to a person forgiving himself. Instead, we are encouraged to accept the forgiveness of God. As Christians, we can facilitate health in others by sharing this message of hope, “as far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us,” Psalm 103:12, NIV.

**FACT** An optimistic outlook appears to be a significant predictor of survival among the oldest-old women. In a twelve-year study of Danish people over 90 years old, women who were more optimistic were at lower risk of death compared to their neutral counterparts. This pattern persisted even after adjusting for confounding factors such as baseline physical and cognitive functioning and disease.

**HOPE** The Psalmist also observed this relationship between optimism and aging in Psalm 92:12-15, pointing out the source of our optimistic outlook: “The righteous will flourish like a palm tree . . . . They will still bear fruit in old age, they will stay fresh and green, proclaiming, “The Lord is upright; He is my Rock” (NIV).

**FACT** Researchers found that in people living with chronic illness, such as arthritis, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and diabetes, acts of gratitude and forgiveness are associated with enhanced quality of life.

**HOPE** Chronic illnesses are long-term or permanent, and often cause significant stress, pain and disability. But with a focus that is upward (gratitude toward God) and outward (forgiving others), a satisfied and meaningful life is possible.

**FACT** A resilient attitude, even more than good physical health, is related to successful aging. Researchers surveyed 1,006 randomly selected adults between the ages of 50 and 99 and found that those with low physical functioning but high resilience had comparable self-ratings of their degree of successful aging to those of physically healthy people who were less resilient.

**HOPE** Perfect physical health is neither necessary nor sufficient for successful aging. By drawing on spiritual resources, such as meditating on God’s promises and turning problems over to Him, we can foster resilience and age successfully.

References: