



Asian-Oceanian Declaration on Epilepsy New Delhi - November 13, 2000

A meeting "Epilepsy: A Public Health Priority in Asian & Oceanian Region" was held in New Delhi on November 10, 2000. Over 600 professionals from health and social sciences sectors and representatives from many other organisations of the region unanimously agreed on November 13, 2000 to the following declaration:

CONSIDERING THAT IN ASIA/OCEANIA:

- At least 30 million people have the common brain disorder - epilepsy. This compares with approximately 50 million people with epilepsy world-wide.
- Epilepsy can have serious medical, psychological, social and economic consequences for people with epilepsy and their families.
- Epilepsy affects people with epilepsy and their families irrespective of race, religion, gender, age or socioeconomic status.
- Although epilepsy is a brain disorder, it is often mistakenly believed to be a mental illness, or to be caused by supernatural powers.
- It is erroneously, yet widely, believed that epilepsy is an infectious disease and seizures are contagious.
- It is often not realised that epilepsy is treatable, and that most people with epilepsy can lead productive lives as a result of relatively inexpensive, cost-effective treatment.
- The majority of people with epilepsy are treated inadequately and inappropriately because of ignorance, discrimination and limited health resources.
- Good quality standard anti-epileptic drugs are not regularly available in many countries.
- Disability and mortality are greater because epilepsy is inadequately treated.
- Epilepsy impacts most severely on the period of greatest development, namely childhood, adolescence and young adulthood. Yet it is during this time of life that it is most readily and successfully treated.
- The preventable causes of epilepsy such as poor perinatal care, infectious diseases, parasitic infestations, head trauma and consanguineous marriages are particularly prevalent.
- Epilepsy has not been included in most National Health Care plans.

PROCLAMATION

We call on the governments and other health providers of the Asian and Oceanian region, to join us in taking strong and decisive action to meet the objectives of the Global Campaign Against Epilepsy launched by the World Health Organization (WHO), the International League Against Epilepsy (ILAE) and the International Bureau for Epilepsy (IBE).

Specifically, we urge every government in this region to:

- Educate people with epilepsy, their families and the general public about epilepsy as a wide-spread, non-communicable and treatable chronic brain disorder. Educational means appropriate to all levels of literacy should be used.
- Educate and train health care and other relevant professionals about epilepsy, its prevention and its treatment.
- Provide access to trained personnel, modern diagnostic equipment and appropriate medication and/or surgical treatment for epilepsy.
- Promote and support research in Asia and Oceania into the basic processes, clinical aspects, and psycho-social consequences of epilepsy.
- Promote social integration and eliminate discrimination against people with epilepsy in all spheres of life, especially school, work and marriage.
- Include epilepsy in their national health plans, just as they do maternal and child health, mental health, infections and immunisation.
- Encourage cooperation between modern medical, traditional and other healing systems for the treatment of epilepsy.
- Encourage the public and private sectors, as well as relevant Non-Governmental Organizations to actively support local activities related to the Global Campaign Against Epilepsy.
- Raise public awareness of epilepsy by proclaiming a National Epilepsy Day, and supporting the establishment of a World Epilepsy Day.
- Encourage regional and global cooperation in dealing with epilepsy.

