



### *North American Declaration on Epilepsy*

- ❑ At a meeting in Los Angeles on December 1, 2000, leaders of North American professional and lay bodies, WHO representatives and health experts from governments and universities unanimously adopted the following declaration:
- ❑ Approximately four million people in North America have epilepsy. In many cases, it is a life-long condition.
- ❑ People with epilepsy have an increased risk of serious injury and death. Their chance of dying is three times higher than people without seizures.
- ❑ Uncontrolled epilepsy can lead to severe adverse social, psychological, and economic consequences.
- ❑ Uncontrolled epilepsy in childhood can lead to permanent brain damage and learning impairment.
- ❑ Seizure disorders are becoming an increasing cause of disability among the elderly.
- ❑ The incidence of epilepsy is increased in socioeconomically disadvantaged groups.
- ❑ The cost of epilepsy, at least 12.5 billion dollars per year in the USA alone, could be reduced substantially with effective action.
- ❑ Epilepsy can be controlled in many people with currently available treatment; however, a large number continue to have seizures despite optimal therapy.
- ❑ Better epilepsy treatment could permit more people to realize their full potential, with economic benefits for the community as well as for themselves.
- ❑ Neuroscience research promises further advances in patient care and, for the first time, offers the possibility of a cure for epilepsy.

Yet,

- ❑ Too often, patients and health care providers believe that seizures cannot be fully controlled and that patients must 'live with them.'
- ❑ Funding for research on epilepsy is lower on a per capita basis than that devoted to many other less common and less burdensome disorders.
- ❑ People with epilepsy in North America have unequal access to necessary care. Socioeconomically deprived groups such as inhabitants of inner cities, and indigenous peoples are particularly neglected.

We call on governments, private organizations, care providers and other concerned individuals:

- ❑ To provide uniform access to optimal care, including specialized centers and surgery where medically indicated.
- ❑ To improve training in epilepsy for specialists, primary care physicians and other health workers.
- ❑ To ensure that people with epilepsy and their families are fully informed about the disorder.
- ❑ To educate teachers, employers, and the general public about epilepsy, in order to reduce stigma and prejudice.
- ❑ To promote the collection, analysis, and interpretation of data necessary to implement and evaluate public health programs related to epilepsy.
- ❑ To increase basic and clinical research funding for epilepsy.
- ❑ To take advantage of recent advances in neuroscience to prevent, treat, and ultimately cure epilepsy.