



Statement to the World Health Assembly 2017

**Prevention of Infant Blindness**

International Pediatric Association

May 2017

Prevention of Blindness Due to Retinopathy of Prematurity (ROP). International Pediatric Association (IPA)

A preventable epidemic of neonatal blindness associated with use of therapeutic oxygen for prematurely born babies is occurring. This epidemic is largely preventable with improved medical practices and procedures with low cost and huge cost savings for families, communities and nations. ROP occurs in prematurely born babies throughout the world. Each year 20,000 babies suffer total blindness or severe visual impairment. Many more (>12,000) develop moderate/mild visual impairment each year. Most of these cases occur in low to middle income countries.

Each of seven achievable policy/practice steps will greatly help eliminate this epidemic of life long blindness:

1. Resuscitations of most preterm infants should be started with room air.
2. Avoiding the use of 100% oxygen for newborns.
3. Adjusting oxygen concentrations when used for newly born babies.
4. Use pulse oximeter guided adjustment if a baby is given extra oxygen.
5. Target oxygen saturations should be 90-95%.
6. Eye exams for every preterm infant <34 weeks gestation at birth treated with oxygen. Refer for ROP treatment as needed.
7. Appropriate use of antenatal corticosteroids and early constant positive airway pressure.

The IPA and member national pediatric societies stand ready to assist in forming feasible vision saving written policies and procedures. As members of the WHA please help accelerate solutions by encouraging Ministries of Health and pediatric professional bodies work together implementing preventative strategies guiding the use of therapeutic oxygen. ROP and associated visual loss is preventable.

The international Pediatric Association (IPA) is a non-governmental organization with a membership of 144 National Pediatric Societies from 139 countries, 10 Regional Pediatric Societies representing all areas of the world, and 13 International Pediatric Specialty Societies. The IPA works collaboratively with member societies to mobilize networks of pediatricians for advocacy and programs in child health, working whenever possible with UN agencies.

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**Childhood Obesity**

International Pediatric Association

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Childhood obesity is a worldwide epidemic NCD, impacting millions, resulting in a burden of chronic disease in children and accelerating NCD development in adults. This dramatic epidemic shortens lives, reduces health and saps community strength around the globe. WHO has recommended a longitudinal life course approach to obesity prevention and treatment. Prevention of childhood obesity and the Global Strategy for Woman's Children's and Adolescent's Health are intimately linked.

Obesity prevention in each life stage, **Preconception, Pregnancy, Infancy, Childhood and Adolescence**, is crucial to interrupt the cycle of multigenerational obesity risk and disease. Specific opportunities for intervention must be established in existing programs that impact the health of families, women, adolescents and children.

**Preconception**-couple counselling regarding prevention of excess gestational weight gain, healthy diet, activity, and reduction of gestational diabetes with existing counselling on family planning.

**Pregnancy**-link emphasis on decisions to breastfeed, coupled with close monitoring for diabetes, excess weight gain, nutritional counselling and improved access to healthy food are essential obesity prevention strategies to routine pregnancy care.

**Infancy**-link knowledge of hunger and satiety cues, extended breast feeding to 6-12 months, attention to healthy weaning and promotion of infant activity to newborn health delivery by health care providers.

**Childhood**-include healthy nutrition, activity and parenting strategies within routine immunization visits.

**Adolescence**-link high risk nutrition and behavior management with smoking cessation, reproductive counselling, substance abuse counselling and routine health care.

The International Pediatric Association strongly recommends that the members of this World Health Assembly adopt focused obesity prevention incorporated in a multi sector strategy for existing health interventions. Targeted community education and skill building for health providers would deliver effective obesity prevention integrated and universal across the life course and would dramatically benefit every community represented in the 70<sup>th</sup> WHA.

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