**This International Epilepsy Day, STEP UP AGAINST STIGMA**

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 **February 13: International Epilepsy Day 2023**

This year’s theme for International Epilepsy Day (13 February), “Step Up Against Stigma”, provides a platform for people with epilepsy, and those who care for them, to dispel myths with facts.

“Epilepsy affects almost every aspect of the life of the person diagnosed with the condition,” said Dr. Francesca Sofia, president of the International Bureau for Epilepsy (IBE). “For many people living with epilepsy, the stigma attached to the condition is often more difficult to deal with than the disease itself.”

In many countries, lack of awareness about epilepsy as a treatable brain condition remains a central public health challenge. Educating people about epilepsy and dispelling myths can reduce stigma and discrimination at school, at work, in the clinic, across the community and at home.

**[INSERT PERSONAL TESTIMONY & QUOTE FROM PERSON WITH EPILEPSY]**

**A Global Action Plan**

In 2022, the World Health Organization endorsed the Intersectoral Global Action Plan on Epilepsy and other Neurological Disorders [IGAP], which aims to reduce the stigma, improve access to treatment and reduce the burden of neurological disorders, as well as improve the quality of life of people with neurological disorders, their carers, and families.

IGAP contains a specific strategic objective of strengthening the public health approach to epilepsy, which calls for 80% of countries to have developed or updated their legislation to promote and protect the rights of people with epilepsy by 2031.

 “IGAP speaks directly to the mission, needs, and aspirations of the global epilepsy community,” said Helen Cross, president of the International League Against Epilepsy (ILAE). “It is therefore a powerful tool to help us close the current unacceptable inclusion, treatment, prevention, and research gaps in epilepsy.”

**[INSERT NATIONAL INFORMATION ON STIGMATISING LEGISLATION]**

**Commemoration events around the world**

International Epilepsy Day is celebrated in more than 100 countries, with epilepsy organizations and advocates scheduling ministerial meetings, informational workshops, awareness-raising campaigns, fundraising events, and social media activity.

**[INSERT NATIONAL INFORMATION ON PLAN TO MARK INTERNATIONAL EPILEPSY DAY]**

IBE and ILAE are encouraging the community to print out an ‘Epilepsy Is…’ placard and to write a message that dispels myths with facts. These messages can be shared online to mark the day.

Join the online conversation using the hashtag #EpilepsyDay and following @IBESocialMedia @IlaeWeb

For more news, assets, and stories, visit the International Epilepsy Day website.

[International Epilepsy Day](https://internationalepilepsyday.org/)

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**About Epilepsy**

It is estimated that more than 50 million people are living with epilepsy around the world [Source: WHO]

The provision of safe, effective, and highly affordable ($5 per person/year) anti-seizure medicines could control seizures in up to 70% of people with epilepsy. [Source: WHO]

Epilepsy ranks among the top five causes of global neurological disability; an estimated 125,000 deaths per year globally are related to the condition. Untreated epilepsy is a life-threatening disorder. The death rate for people with epilepsy is three times that of the general population. [Source: WHO]

Every fourth case of epilepsy could be prevented by addressing and minimizing risk factors, such as stroke, brain infections, birth injuries, and head trauma. However, prevention strategies remain limited and underexplored. [Source: WHO]

People with epilepsy are disproportionately affected by other conditions as well, such as depression, anxiety, dementia, migraine, heart disease, peptic ulcers, and arthritis. [Source: WHO]