A World Health Assembly Resolution:

Folic Acid Fortification to Prevent Spina Bifida

Geneva, May 24
6:00 PM - 9:00 PM
Hilton Geneva Hotel & Conference Centre
Route Francois-Peyrot 34
Geneva, 1218, Switzerland

Contact details:
contact@theg4alliance.org
info@ifglobal.org
gapsbif@uab.edu

Website:
www.theg4alliance.org/gapsbif
Recognizing the 63rd World Health Assembly’s Resolution on Birth Defects that appealed to member states to prioritize prevention of birth defects, we are concerned by the high number of pregnancies affected by folic acid-preventable spina bifida and anencephaly globally.

World-wide at least 300,000 pregnancies are estimated to be affected with spina bifida and anencephaly annually, and 75% of them result in elective terminations, stillbirths, or under-five deaths. Those who survive have life-long paralysis and neurologic impairment; most require multiple surgeries, unavailable in low- and middle-income countries. Families face stigma and cannot afford the cost of care.

Folic acid fortification is the most effective public health strategy to prevent spina bifida and anencephaly equitably in the population. Fortified staple foods provide folic acid to women of reproductive age at a critical time in pregnancy, preventing spina bifida and anencephaly.

Mandatory food fortification with adequate folic acid has been implemented in 58 countries since the late 1990s. Folic acid fortification is safe, effective, and has high cost-benefit ratio. Yet, over 100 countries lack this intervention, adversely impacting the most vulnerable populations.

This side event will bring together key stakeholders, including policymakers, patient care leaders, NGOs, and member states, to discuss a way forward toward a WHA resolution on folic acid fortification to prevent spina bifida.

---

Program

Registration & Mingling 6.00PM
Welcome & Introductions 6.30PM
Gail Rosseau, MD - G4 Alliance
Luz De Regil, PhD - WHO

Spina bifida: a patient perspective 6.35PM
Nebiyat Tesfaye, MD
ReachAnother Foundation

Spina bifida and anencephaly: treatment, impact, and consequences 6.40PM
Rick Boop, MD
St Jude Children’s Research Hospital

Epidemiology of spina bifida and anencephaly: a global public health concern in need of prevention 6.50PM
Vijaya Kancherla, PhD
Emory University - Center for Spina Bifida Prevention

Folic acid fortification – the safe and effective action towards spina bifida prevention 7.00PM
Helena Pachón, PhD
Food Fortification Initiative

A public-private-civil society partnership for science-based advocacy 7.10PM
Sylvia Roozen, PhD
International Federation for Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus

Moderated Q&A and panel discussion 7.20PM

The WHA Resolution 7.40PM
German Escobar
Vice-Minister of Health, Colombia

Call to Action 7.45PM

Adjourn to refreshments and individual discussion 7.50PM