

From EXPO 2015 an official call upon Italy's Healthy Ministry to adopt a National Hydration Day as the first step towards a World Hydration Day

Meeting centred on the presentation of the Manifesto of Hydration and the Consensus Paper on the risk and harm for human health of inadequate or inappropriate hydration

The two documents make up the scientific contribution on hydration to the Charter of Milan, the legacy of Milan EXPO 2015 to future generations.

Milan, June 11, 2015—Today marked a momentous day at Milan EXPO 2015 where the discussion focused on wellness, health and the fundamental role of appropriate hydration in the prevention of many diseases. We owe this to ***Hydration and Health, the hidden link***, the conference organized by FEMTEC and the promoters of the Charter of Milan, with the support of the Sanpellegrino Group.

The event provided an opportunity also for calling upon Italy's Ministry of Health to adopt a **National Hydration Day**, as a significant step towards the inclusion of appropriate hydration among the main health goals of international health policies going forward, hoping that a **World Hydration Day** may soon be adopted.

The call originated from the needs emerged from the *Water & Health: How water protects and improves health overall* **Consensus Paper** which provides scientific information about hydration including clinical trial data from a review of scientific literature conducted by **FEMTEC**, the World Federation of Hydrotherapy and Climatotherapy, with the technical support of the Traditional and Complementary Medicine team of the **World Health Organization (WHO)**. That information is reflected in the **Manifesto of Hydration**, the document that sets forth the golden rules for appropriate hydration from experts in the field.

The conference programme featured high-calibre domestic and international experts as well as representatives from the WHO, Italy's Ministry of Health and the Charter of Milan.

Obesity (affecting 10% of the Italian population and 600 million people worldwide, and, according to the WHO, on the way to becoming a true epidemic in Europe by 2030), cardiovascular disease (responsible for 44% of deaths in Italy), diabetes (affecting 5 million people in Italy, and, according to the WHO, some 346 million people globally), kidney disease (chronic kidney disease affects 5-6 million Italians)... these are all diseases in which the

importance of a healthy diet has been firmly evidenced and broadly recognised. These are all diseases for which today, for the first time, it was officially sanctioned that appropriate hydration does make a difference. Not just a healthy diet, but also appropriate hydration.

The conference was a journey through all the dangers that inadequate or inappropriate hydration poses to human health, from the most well-known (e.g. reduced skin elasticity and kidney function) to the least known and most surprising (e.g. decreased ability to focus and increased blood thickness).

“Based on scientific literature, today we can affirm appropriate hydration to be a key pillar of a modern healthy lifestyle. We are aware of the importance of providing correct information to both practitioners and the broad public, and this is why we chose Milan EXPO 2015 as venue, as it provides a unique opportunity to bring these topics to global attention and reach a large number of people. I believe the documents presented today and the call for a Hydration Day are particularly important and significant, and represent a common commitment on the part of all those who participated in this project to making the messages given here today a long-lasting legacy to future generations, who as a result will hopefully change their behaviours going forward” said **Prof. Umberto Solimene**, President of FEMTEC and of the **Milan University** Centre for Medical Bioclimatology, Hydrotherapy and Well-being Science

The **Manifesto of Hydration**, which was prepared based on the evidence set out in the **Consensus Paper**, was signed by all speakers at the conference, as a way to promote the inclusion of appropriate hydration among the goals of national and international health policies going forward and hopefully the forthcoming adoption of a World Hydration Day.

An official call of great significance, and in fact, together with the Consensus Paper, it will make up the scientific contribution on appropriate hydration to the **Charter of Milan**, as EXPO 2015 legacy to future generations.

As explained by **Prof. Salvatore Veca**, the goals of the Charter of Milan **include** *“raising awareness about the vital connection of diet and hydration with health. The global issue of water, which is central as highlighted in several parts of the Charter and vital in a variety of world contexts, can and must involve the individual responsibility of people to adopt healthy lifestyles and diet as well as appropriate hydration.”*

“The Consensus Paper and the Manifesto of Hydration will leave visible marks that will outlast Milan EXPO 2015, attesting to the crucial role of appropriate hydration for overall health. Our final call is that, for its significant role in Traditional and Complementary Medicine, hydration be included among health protection goals, be the subject of information campaigns and be included in all those government actions promoting healthy lifestyles as a way to prevent a multitude of disorders and illnesses” said **Prof. Zhang Qi**, TRM Team Coordinator, WHO, Geneva.

Today’s event provided also the opportunity for all institutional representatives of FEMTEC members from more than 30 countries, starting from Italian members, to call upon their respective Health Ministry to adopt a **National Hydration Day**, with a long-term global objective: the adoption of a **World Hydration Day**.

So, a truly momentous day, showing the joint commitment of public and private players, the academia, the scientific community, institutions and the industry to this theme. The event was

made possible also thanks to the Sanpellegrino Group. **Stefano Agostini**, Chairman and CEO of the Sanpellegrino Group said: *“Aware of the vital role water plays in the life of every human being, Sanpellegrino, a leading Italian Group in the mineral water industry, has long been working to bring to attention the importance of appropriate hydration. Given the strong connection between hydration and the theme of Milan EXPO 2015 – feeding the planet, energy for life- Sanpellegrino thought this would provide a valuable opportunity for bringing to even broader attention, in fact, to global attention, the theme of hydration, which sadly is not much discussed and people do not know much about. We are pleased with the interest this initiative has attracted at all levels, and with the fruits it has borne, that we hope will be long-lasting.”*

It should not come as a surprise that **water** has a **crucial role in the pursuit of wellness and health**. Water is, in fact, essential for the physiological processes of digestion, nutrient absorption and removal of indigestible metabolic wastes from the human body, as well as for its contribution to proper blood circulation and regulation of body temperature.

We need to bear in mind that since the human body cannot store water, we need to replace the amount of water our body loses daily if we want our body to function properly. In brief, the maintenance of the water balance in our body is ultimately regulated by the thirst sensation and depends on it. Therefore, a good habit to ensure our body remains appropriately hydrated and healthy is to drink water before we feel thirsty, before the **stimulus to thirst** kicks in, which it does when the body's **water loss is already 2% of body weight**.

The documents that were presented today highlight the **importance of water for certain body functions** and the **role of hydration in ensuring overall health**. Specifically, there are beneficial effects for the **urinary tract** when people consume waters that enhance diuresis, help eliminate waste, prevent stone formation, and have an anti-inflammatory and anti-infective action. Treatments with mineral waters are beneficial for, among others, the **cardiovascular system**. Appropriate hydration reduces blood viscosity and the risk of thrombosis, magnesium contained in water promotes the relaxation of heart muscle cells, while calcium stimulates heart contraction and participates in blood coagulation, reducing the risk of infarction.

In addition to being beneficial for the **gastrointestinal tract**, appropriate hydration has positive effects in terms of **metabolism protection**. From the review of scientific literature it emerged that some types of water prevent the complex metabolic disorders typical of obesity. Water is indispensable also for **healthy brain function** as dehydration reduces brain efficiency and impairs cognitive processes. A loss of one litre of water, in fact, dehydrates the brain tissue and produces effects on its functioning similar to those observed after two and a half months with Alzheimer's disease.

Appropriate hydration is particularly important for specific population groups, especially: **children**, to ensure healthy development of their mental and physical functions; **women**, in particular during breastfeeding and menopause, that represent most critical moments in their life; and **elderly people** whose altered stimulus to thirst makes them feel thirst less readily and therefore drink less than younger people.