



Coimbra, 13th November 2023

Dear colleagues,

The College of Cardiology of the Portuguese Medical Association recognizes the critical and escalating risks posed by a potential nuclear war. The European Union of Medical Specialists (UEMS) appealed its members to engage in discussions and initiatives for nuclear disarmament and to take a stance on this matter. Our board entirely endorses this call and fully supports the recent editorial by numerous esteemed medical journals, coming together to address this urgent and multifaceted issue and urging healthcare professionals to raise awareness about the major threats of nuclear war and advocate for its prevention. Indeed, as healthcare professionals dedicated to prevention, cardiologists have a significant role to play in addressing this ongoing threat. The intersection between the risks associated with cardiovascular health and the risks of nuclear war is striking, making our involvement not only appropriate but imperative.

Recent international events, such as the crisis in Ukraine, have once again brought this topic to the forefront. The devastating consequences of a nuclear conflict on human health are well known, with immediate and long-term effects that extend beyond borders and generations. Not only is there the potential of direct injuries and deaths but it also greatly increases the risk of chronic diseases due to radiation exposure, disruption of medical care and access to essential medications. In addition, there is inevitable associated psychological trauma and social disruption, which can recognizably contribute to cardiovascular disease.

Nuclear disarmament is a complex, global endeavour, and as healthcare providers, we have a moral obligation to participate in discussions aimed at mitigating the risks associated with the use of nuclear weapons in the present and future. The medical and health community has historically played a pivotal role in advocating for nuclear disarmament, particularly the International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW) federation, whose work was duly recognized with the awarding of the 1985 and 2017 Nobel Peace Prizes.

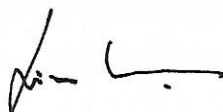
Cardiologists are well-equipped to understand and address nuclear risks due to the similarities between catastrophic cardiovascular events and the potential devastation of nuclear war. Both are low-probability, high-consequence negative events, and we have honed our skills in preventing such

occurrences. Our understanding of cumulative risk, often used in cardiovascular care, is directly relevant to the prolonged risk posed by nuclear warfare. A 1% annual risk of nuclear war can accumulate to a 50% risk over a 70-year period, emphasizing the urgency of preventive action. Preventing nuclear war is no less challenging than preventing cardiac events but is, particularly in current times, equally essential. We must advocate for a shift in this high-risk but modifiable behaviour, recognizing that destructive force can no longer be the guarantor of security.

While the prevention of nuclear war policy is primarily managed by governmental leaders, healthcare professionals, like cardiologists, have a crucial role in shaping public opinion and advocating for disarmament and must engage in efforts that raise awareness of the nuclear threat. Educating the public about the catastrophic consequences of nuclear war and its cumulative probability aspect is crucial. We must draw upon the lessons from the past when physicians effectively conveyed the medical implications of nuclear weapons to the public, leading to a groundswell of opposition and political action. The medical voice undoubtedly remains a powerful tool in lowering the risk of nuclear war. Collaborating with organizations such as the International Physicians for Prevention of Nuclear War, Physicians for Social Responsibility, and the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons can provide a platform for our involvement.

The College of Cardiology encourages its members, as well as the broader medical community, to recognize this existential threat and actively engage in efforts to reduce it. We must leverage our unique perspectives, educational capacity, and influence to educate the public about the dangers of nuclear war, advocate for disarmament, and support initiatives that promote global security. By joining the movement to abolish nuclear weapons, we can make a difference. It is our moral and professional duty to act in the face of this looming danger and ensure a safer and consequently healthier world for all.

With our best regards,



Professor Lino Gonçalves

Portuguese College of Cardiology President