At the MEDPED meeting, just prior to the meeting of the European Atherosclerosis Society in Athens in May 1999, the ‘First WHO Report on Familial Hypercholesterolemia’ was introduced. This report was drawn up by many MEDPED collaborators, in close collaboration with the WHO, and views the situation concerning the disease familial hypercholesterolemia (FH) from many angles, addressing all the issues raised by clinicians, researchers, patients and government officials. This report could be used to promote FH case-finding activities or as a discussion paper in negotiations with government institutions.

In the mean time, a follow-up document has been prepared and the WHO is now in the process of publishing the ‘Second WHO Report on Familial Hypercholesterolemia’. Again, many MEDPED collaborators contributed to this report by supplying data on the situation of inherited lipid disorders in their countries obtained by questionnaire and during a consultation in September 1998 organised by the WHO. Most participating countries responded to the request for information. This survey, last updated in February and March of 1999, addressed the extent of identification and methods used, diagnosis and treatment of inherited lipid disorders and government involvement in the 28 countries participating in the MEDPED program.

The report makes it clear that improvement in the conditions of FH patients is required. To do this, many actions have to be undertaken, such as a higher degree of case identification, improvement in the availability of effective cholesterol-lowering medication, and the encouragement of long-term follow-up and drug compliance. The first actions should be directed towards governments and Ministries of Public Health, whose primary responsibility is to improve public health. Governments and the different public health systems should take measures to increase awareness in the general public and the medical community about the extent of the health hazards associated with inherited lipid disorders. It is on this level where the initiative must be taken and public awareness actively promoted. Subsequently, the medical and scientific communities and insurance companies must be prepared to follow-up on these actions and to take care of the special needs of persons with inherited lipid disorders.

Countries participating in the MEDPED program are:

- Australia
- Austria
- Brazil
- Canada
- Chile
- Colombia
- Czech Republic
- Denmark
- France
- Germany
- Greece
- Hong Kong
- Hungary
- Iceland
- Ireland
- Israel
- Italy
- Japan
- Lebanon
- Malaysia
- Netherlands
- New Zealand
- Norway
- Poland
- Portugal
- Russia
- Slovenia
- South Africa
- Spain
- Switzerland
- United Kingdom
- United States
- Sweden
- Singapore
- Iceland
- Norway
- Switzerland
- United Kingdom
- United States
- Sweden
- Singapore

The first report is available on request from the MEDPED co-ordinating centre in Salt Lake City or from the WHO:

Dr Susan Stephenson
Cardiovascular Genetics, University of Utah 410 Chipeta Way, Room 16, Salt Lake City, UT 84108, USA
Tel.: +1-801-581-3888, ext. 212
Fax: +1-801-581-6862
E-mail: sstephen@ucvg.med.utah.edu

Dr Victor Boulyjenkov
World Health Organisation, Human Genetics Programme Division of Noncommunicable Diseases 1211 Geneva 27, Switzerland
Fax: +41-22-791-0746
E-mail: boulyjenkovv@who.ch