

Public Health in the News

Deaths from heart disease and stroke could rise unless countries address risk factors

Over the next decade, early deaths from cardiovascular disease are expected to climb from 5.9 million in 2013 to 7.8 million in 2025 – according to the first-ever forecasting analysis for heart disease from the Global Burden of Disease project. As a result, many United Nations member states will not meet targets set in 2013 as part of a global action plan to address non-communicable diseases, which includes reducing premature deaths from cardiovascular disease by 25% by 2025. Cardiovascular diseases, the leading cause of premature death in the world, include heart attacks, strokes, and other heart and circulatory diseases.

The UN target is achievable for some countries, including the US, but only by addressing trends related to risk factors such as high blood pressure, tobacco use, obesity, and diabetes. If current trends continue, many of the world's most populous countries – including China, India, Russia, Mexico, and Ethiopia - would see no improvement in premature mortality due to heart disease and stroke. Southeast Asia, East Asia, and South Asia would account for 60% of these deaths. Premature deaths from cardiovascular disease would rise in some countries in Africa, Eastern Europe, and Central Asia. Countries such as the US, Brazil, and South Africa would see declines in premature mortality from cardiovascular disease but not enough to meet the UN goal of a 25% reduction.

Published in the journal *Circulation* on September 29, the study, "*Estimates of global and regional premature cardiovascular mortality in 2025*," was conducted by a global collaborative network of researchers led by the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME) at the University of Washington. The study is the first by IHME to forecast health trends. "We can clearly see what needs to be done over the next decade to reduce cardiovascular death worldwide," said Dr. Gregory Roth, Assistant Professor at IHME and the Division of Cardiology at the University of Washington. "To have the greatest impact, we need to focus on the leading risk factors in each country. For most, that means healthier diets, more exercise, quitting tobacco, and less binge drinking of alcohol. But it also means investing in high-quality primary care and hospitals because many treatments for heart disease work well and can make a real difference."...

Sources: *Medical Xpress*, 29 September 2015

September is National Heart Awareness Month in South Africa and World Heart Day was celebrated on 29 September. Cardiovascular disease is known as a non-communicable disease (NCDs), and the World Health Organisation (WHO) estimates the burden of NCDs in South Africa to be 2 to 3 times higher than in developed countries, accounting for up to 28% of the total burden of disease. With South Africa's crime statistics being released this week, it is interesting to note that while 49 people are murdered in South Africa every day (2014 - 2015), a shocking 210 die of heart disease every single day. Some other statistics in South Africa include:

- South Africa has one of the highest rates of high blood pressure worldwide: 1 in 3 adults
- High blood pressure is a silent killer - 75% of people with high blood pressure don't even know they have it.
- 1 in 5 high school children in South Africa smoke
- South Africa has the world's highest rate of blood pressure among people over the age of 50 years old
- 440 people have a stroke every day in South Africa
- 1 in 2 adults and a quarter of children are overweight
- 80% of these premature deaths can be prevented by eating better, moving more, and avoiding smoking.

Source: *Health24*, 29 September 2015

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