

Cardiovascular Disease (CVD) Prevalence and Costs

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According to a new study by the American Heart Association, America's Baby Boomers and Cardiovascular Disease (CVD) are on a collision course of alarming proportions. By 2030, it is projected that 40.5% of Americans—116 million people—will have some form of CVD.

In spite of enormous advances in prevention and treatment, and a decline in mortality rates, heart disease and stroke remain respectively the number one and four killers of Americans. But can an already bad situation get even worse? The answer is a frightening “yes.”

Treating cardiovascular disease is already an enormous drain on resources. In fact, CVD not only ranks as the leading killer in America, but as the most costly disease in the nation. The share of overall medical costs for CVD is seventeen percent. The projected toll in death, human suffering and health care costs to the Nation are as staggering and crippling as the disease itself. And CVD is blind with respect to gender and ethnicity. In 2030, 39% of men and 42% of women will have some form of CVD, and blacks suffer at higher rates than whites and Hispanics.

Between 2010 and 2030, total direct medical costs of CVD are projected to triple, from \$273 billion to \$818 billion. Real indirect costs due to lost productivity for all forms of CVD, are estimated to increase from \$172 billion in 2010 to \$276 billion in 2030, an increase of more than 60 percent. The combined costs are projected to exceed \$1 trillion by 2030.

What's Driving the Cost Increase?

America's 78 million Baby Boomers are babies no more. The advance guard has already reached retirement age and will be eligible for Medicare when they turn 65 in 2011. The graying of the population combined with the explosive growth in medical spending are the primary drivers of increased CVD costs, which are expected to grow the fastest for ages 65 and over. Annual CVD costs for persons age 65 to 79 are projected to increase by a whopping 238 percent, from \$135 billion to \$457 billion per year.

The Status Quo is a Killer

Under current prevention and treatment trends, CVD will grow by nearly 10 percent over the next 20 years, while direct costs will increase almost threefold. Direct costs of CVD will continue to account for a relatively stable and large share of the nation's overall medical expenditures.

However, if some risk factors, such as diabetes and obesity continue to increase rapidly, we may see a greater increase in CVD prevalence and its associated costs.

Recent studies project that current overweight adolescents will bump up future adult obesity rates by 5 percent to 15 percent by 2035, resulting in more than 100,000 cases of coronary heart disease, while associated costs will increase by \$254 billion.

The Sooner the Better

Emerging evidence suggests that CVD prevention should begin early in life; the sooner the better. Modest improvements in risk factors earlier in life have a far greater impact than more substantial reductions later on in life. The payoffs can be huge. For example, a modest 28 percent reduction in LDL (bad) cholesterol from birth resulted in an 88 percent reduction in the risk of coronary heart disease. Contrast that to the 20-30 percent reduction in CVD seen with a 30 percent reduction in LDL with statin medications initiated in middle and older ages.

Getting a Grip on High Blood Pressure

One out of three Americans currently have hypertension; a silent killer that accounts for 18 percent of CVD deaths in Western countries. It is also a major risk factor for stroke, coronary heart disease, and heart failure. Hypertension is the most costly form of CVD. The total medical cost for hypertension makes it a particularly valuable target to reign in CVD's future costs.

Annual medical costs directly attributable to hypertension are projected to increase by \$130 billion over the next 20 years for a total projected annual cost of \$200 billion by 2030. And that is just scratching the surface. If the cost is expanded to include how much the presence of hypertension contributes to the treatment of related diseases, such as coronary heart disease and stroke, the increase of annual spending for 2010 to 2030 almost doubles.

Source:

American Heart Association, American Stroke Association

<http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/> www.strokeassociation.org

Please contact me at nanmaley@sullivan-benefits.com to schedule your employee blood pressure screening. I would be happy to assist with your efforts in educating your employees about the dangers of heart disease, how to reduce risks and the rising costs of CVD.

Congratulations, just taking the time to read this article is a positive step toward introducing wellness and the benefits available from a healthier lifestyle. Thank you for your time and THINK WELLNESS!