

Cardiovascular Disease: Global Death Rates Increase, Mortality Rates Decrease



According to a new study "Demographic and Epidemiologic Drivers of Global Cardiovascular Mortality," published in *The New England Journal of Medicine*, cardiovascular disease continues to be the leading cause of premature death in the world including heart attacks, strokes, and other circulatory diseases. The research was led by the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME) at the University of Washington.

The global population is soon to exceed 7 billion and the number of old people continues to increase. The number of deaths from cardiovascular diseases is also on the rise. However, significant efforts have been made to prevent and treat cardiovascular diseases and these efforts have worked to slow down the rise of cardiovascular deaths.

The number of deaths due to cardiovascular diseases increased by 41 percent between 1990 and 2013 (from 12.3 million deaths to 17.3 million) and over the same period of time, death rates within specific age groups decreased by 39 percent. Death rates from cardiovascular diseases remained steady or declined in every region of the world except western sub-Saharan Africa.

Progress to fight cardiovascular diseases has been fairly successful around the world but varies by region. The largest jump in total deaths due to cardiovascular disease was observed in South Asia (which includes India), with 1.8 million more deaths in 2013 than in 1990. The rise in cardiovascular deaths in India is primarily driven by population growth and ageing.

In other regions including Middle East and North Africa, population growth and ageing have been offset by a significant decline in age-specific death rates from cardiovascular disease. East Asia has experienced a rise of almost 50 percent (1.2 million additional deaths) and declines in the risk of cardiovascular diseases have offset the effect of a rapidly ageing population.

There was no detectable change in the number of deaths from cardiovascular diseases in US and Canada. Ageing and population growth balanced out declines in age-specific death rates. The same was true in southern Latin America, Australia and New Zealand.

The only two regions that have shown significant reduction not only in the death rates but also the total number of deaths from cardiovascular diseases include Central Europe and Western Europe with declines of 5.2 percent and 12.8 percent respectively between 1990 and 2013. The highest decline in cardiovascular death rates were achieved in the high-income Asia Pacific region (which includes Japan).

"Cardiovascular diseases will remain a global threat as the population grows and people age," said Dr. Gregory Roth, Assistant Professor at IHME from the Division of Cardiology at the University of Washington. "But the progress seen in some regions shows that reducing the toll of cardiovascular diseases is possible."

The study found that population ageing contributed to 55 percent increase in cardiovascular disease deaths globally and population growth contributed to a 25 percent increase. Ischaemic heart disease is both the leading cause of death worldwide and accounts for nearly half of the increase in the number of cardiovascular deaths. Other types of cardiovascular causes of death include aortic aneurysm, hypertensive heart disease and endocarditis among others.

Death rates due to atrial fibrillation and peripheral vascular disease jumped significantly since 1990 due to higher death rates within specific age groups and ageing and population growth.

Source: [New England Journal of Medicine](#)

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