
Cardiovascular Disease - UK's No. 1 Killer among Women



While cancer has overtaken cardiovascular disease as the number one killer in the UK among men, cardiovascular disease still remains the most common cause of death among women and kills more young women than breast cancer. The research has been published in the journal *Heart*.

Cardiovascular disease includes coronary heart disease, stroke, high blood pressure, circulatory system disease, and other vascular/arterial disease. Using the latest nationally available data for each of the four UK countries and the Cardiovascular Disease Statistics 2014 report, the researchers quantified the prevalence of cardiovascular disease and evaluated how it's treated, how much it costs, and how many deaths it causes. They analysed the Clinical Practice Research Datalink GOLD database as well as information from the family doctor (GP) quality improvement scheme known as QOF, and figures on episodes of inpatient hospital care.

Their analysis showed that nearly 2.3 million people had some form of coronary heart disease in 2012. Approximately half a million people were living with heart failure and 1.1 million were living with atrial fibrillation. Among the four UK countries that were included in the analysis, England had the lowest prevalence of cardiovascular conditions with higher rates in the North of England as compared to the South. Scotland had the highest prevalence of coronary heart disease, stroke, and peripheral vascular disease, while Wales had the highest prevalence of high blood pressure, heart failure, and atrial fibrillation.

Cancer overtook cardiovascular disease as the primary cause of death in 2012 for men. Death attributable to cancer was 29 percent as compared to 28 percent for cardiovascular disease. One in three deaths (32 percent) in men was caused by cancer as compared to 29 percent due to cardiovascular disease. 27 percent deaths in women were caused by cancer as compared to 28 percent by cardiovascular disease. 42,000 premature deaths were caused due to cardiovascular disease in 2012.

Death rates were higher in Scotland (347/100,000 of the population) and the North of England (320/100,000) with lower rates in the South of England. The city of Glasgow was at the very top for death rates from cardiovascular disease for all ages, including premature deaths. The NHS spent around £7 billion in England alone on cardiovascular disease as compared to £442.3 million Wales, £393 million in Northern Ireland, and over £750 million in Scotland.

"Cardiovascular disease remains a substantial burden to the UK, both in terms of health and economic costs," write the researchers, highlighting the "stark regional inequalities in the mortality and prevalence of [cardiovascular disease]."

In an accompanying editorial, Dr. Adam Timmis, of the NIHR Cardiovascular Biomedical Research Unit at Barts Health, London highlighted the fact that the continuing North-South divide is a "stain on the UK's public health record." He also points out that most of the deaths in women were due to heart attack which is preventable through modification of risk factors. The national effort that is put into the detection of breast cancer should be matched in protecting women from heart attacks.

Source: BMJ

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