

World Stroke Day and The Importance of Preventive Healthcare



According to a UN health agency report, non-communicable diseases (NCDs) constitute one of the largest health problems in the recent years, accounting for nearly three quarters of deaths globally. Among the main types of NCDs are cardiovascular diseases (CVD), including heart disease and stroke, cancer, diabetes and chronic respiratory diseases, along with mental health illnesses.

Stroke is the second leading cause of death and third leading cause of disability. Although we see a significant increase in the global burden of stroke, an estimated 70% of strokes happen in low- or middle-income countries (Singh 2021). This is substantially caused by an increase in exposure to important risk factors including, but not limited to high BMI, physical inactivity, and exposure to high levels of air pollution.

To develop primary stroke prevention strategies, there needs to be more focus on a comprehensive approach that targets populations at all levels of CVD risk, instead of only targeting high-risk populations.

Health care systems must improve their methods of prevention. They must ensure relevant and meaningful information is provided to support populations in adhering to recommended lifestyle and habit changes, as well as ensuring they take the appropriate medications (Feigin et al. 2016).

Primary prevention recommendations are specifically low among people with a moderately increased risk of stroke, but who would benefit from changing their lifestyle habits by addressing simple risk factors like smoking, diet and exercise. This could be the result of a lack of effective communication between the patient and doctor (Feigin et al. 2016).

Prevention strategies should be similar in both developing and developed countries, however differences in the availability of resources and risk factors for stroke must be considered in order for appropriate and realistic goals to be set (Feigin et al. 2016).

For example, among developing countries, hemorrhagic stroke is much more common and therefore requires a strong focus on reducing exposure to air pollution and managing high blood pressure. By contrast, ischaemic stroke is more common in developed countries, and therefore requires more focus on reducing behavioural risks, including diet and physical inactivity (Feigin et al. 2016).

As reinstated by WHO, NCDs, including stroke, can be prevented by investing in cost effective strategies. With larger investments, low and middle-income countries could face economic benefits of \$2.7 trillion by 2030.

Source: [UN News](#)

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