

Trends in heart mortality reversing in younger women

Coronary heart disease mortality in younger women could be on the rise, according to findings in the open access journal, BMC Public Health, published by BioMed Central. High levels of smoking, increasing obesity and a lack of exercise could all be contributing to this disturbing trend, seen in women under the age of 50.

Coronary heart disease (CHD) is the most common cause of death in the UK, the US, Canada and Australia. It occurs when the arteries supplying blood to the heart narrow, and includes disorders such as heart attacks and angina.

Steven Allender from the University of Oxford and colleagues from the University of Liverpool, UK studied information on all deaths in England and Wales between 1931 and 2005. They examined how CHD mortality rates had changed over time, for different sexes and age groups.

They found that CHD mortality rates in England and Wales rose steadily throughout the 20th century and peaked in the 1970s. In most groups, the rate of CHD mortality has been falling steadily since then. Recent generations have experienced much lower CHD mortality rates than those born in the late 19th or early 20th centuries.

Despite this, researchers have detected a levelling off – and perhaps even a reversal – of the rate of decline in CHD mortality in women under 50. Given that CHD causes over 100,000 deaths in the UK each year, such a trend would have serious implications for health-care provision in the future.

The authors also found evidence that significant advances made in terms of CHD mortality among older populations are not being made in the under-60s – something they warn could increase the burden of CHD if left unchecked.

“We observed that CHD mortality among younger age groups has increased in those born in the early twentieth century compared to those born in the late 19th century” notes Allender. “This requires further study as the public health implications of a decline in survival from CHD in younger age groups may be stark.”

Source: BioMed Central

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