



Knowing Your Heart

Cardiovascular Diseases Brief in the Philippines

Cardiovascular Diseases (CVDs) occupy the Top 3 Causes of Mortality in the Philippines, according to the Department of Health (DOH). CVDs can potentially inflict 9 out of 10 Filipinos, which lead to 67,000 deaths per year. Also, 168 lives are claimed daily due to stroke alone.

The CVDs are referred collectively as a group of diseases that affect the heart and blood vessels. Some of the common kinds are arteriosclerosis, hypertension aka "high blood pressure", myocardial infarction aka "heart attack", and cerebrovascular accident aka "stroke". The common symptoms of a CVD are: chest pains that discharge up to the shoulders, arms, and neck; irregular and rapid heartbeats; heavy breathing; and dizziness.

The Food and Nutrition Research Institute has pointed-out that physical lifestyle of smoking, lack of daily exercise, heavy alcohol drinking, and unhealthy diet are highly plausible causes of CVDs. The nicotine from smoking hardens the arteries, which causes disruption in blood flow. A diet of high fat and high sodium induces fat deposition and clotting in the blood stream. During physical activity, excess alcohol is burned thus excess fats are stored instead. The lack of exercise increases the chance of high fat storage in the body. The mentioned causes affect the pumping of the heart and the blood circulation through the other organs.

The cost of CVD treatment soars from P200,000 up to P1.5 Million. The Philippine Heart Center, the country's leading facility that specializes on heart diseases, is programmed to undergo Private-Public Partnerships which in

turn will make CVD treatment surely even more beyond the reach of the masses. In fact, the bed capacity for charity and indigent patients is down to 20% compared to 70% when it first opened.

The DOH has tried to implement exercise and information dissemination campaigns on CVDs, but has failed to go through the root causes such as lack of education, and lifestyle choices due to economic incapacity, which are correlated to CVD prevalence. In a study by the University of California, it was concluded that "people with lower socioeconomic status had a 50 percent greater risk of developing heart disease. The reason is often attributed to reduced health-care access or poor adherence to treatments such as smoking cessation or medication".

A person's health may be approached individually. But it still is the responsibility of the government to look into the bigger picture and provide for the external factors such as economic capacity and education.

Quick Facts:

How does increased fiber intake help fight CVD?

- Soluble fiber is the type of fiber that helps lower cholesterol and LDL (unwanted fat) in the body.
- The fiber turns into compounds that inhibit cholesterol formation in the blood.
- 20 grams of fiber is recommended which can be taken from a combination of grains, fruits, and vegetables for every meal

Examples of fiber rich items with 3g Fiber are:

- 1 cup of white corn, or brown rice; or 2 slices of wheat bread
- 1 cup raw of sitaw, bataw, spinach, or mustasa
- 1 medium piece of atis, apple, or santol
- 1 slice of watermelon or papaya