

2 out of 3 heart attacks and strokes in Asia

January 18 2007

Given that around half of the world's burden of cardiovascular disease is carried by low and middle income countries in the region, these findings, published by the Asia-Pacific Cohort Studies Collaboration (APCSC) in the Journal of Hypertension, highlight the immense impact that blood pressure-lowering strategies could have in the area.

Dr Alexandra Martiniuk, author and Senior Research Fellow at The George Institute for International Health (part of the APCSC Secretariat) said, "We aimed to identify the role of hypertension (high blood pressure) in cardiovascular diseases in the Asia-Pacific region and found that hypertension was the key factor in more than half of cases. This shows the potential reduction in deaths from heart disease and stroke that could have been achieved if high blood pressure were controlled in this region."

APCSC Researchers found that the fraction of deaths caused by stroke, as a result of hypertension, reaches up to over 60% in certain countries (Indonesia and Mongolia). High levels were also found in Malaysia, China, Philippines and Hong Kong (over 50%). The study also identified high blood pressure causes a high percentage of deaths caused by heart disease in Mongolia and China at around 30%.

Researchers used recent data on hypertension from more than half a million adult participants to determine the risks for heart disease and stroke attributable to hypertension. The research was also able to attain precise estimates for women in the region, confirming that hypertension is as risky for women as men.

Hypertension is the third leading modifiable risk factor for global burden of disease after tobacco and alcohol. Priority needs in this area include population-based strategies to prevent or reduce high blood pressure, as well as prevention and treatment of high blood pressure in individuals.

Dr Martiniuk added that "There is little doubt that salt is the leading cause of high blood pressure in the area. Salt consumption in China, particularly Northern China, is among the highest in the world. Efforts to restrict its addition to food and as a storage medium in parts of Asia would help in reducing its role in increasing hypertension."

Low and middle income countries such as China and India account for 80% of global cardiovascular-related deaths and 87% of cardiovascular related disabilities.

Priority needs in this area include population-based prevention strategies to prevent or reduce high blood pressure as well as individual-level prevention and treatment of high blood pressure.

The APCSC is the largest-ever partnership and study of cardiovascular disease in the Asian region. Project partners included many medical institutions across the Asia Pacific region.

The collaboration's primary goal is to provide direct, reliable evidence about the determinants of stroke, coronary heart disease, and other common causes of death in Asia-Pacific populations. It aims to produce region-, age- and gender-specific estimates of the cardiovascular disease risks associated with blood pressure, cholesterol, diabetes and other major risk factors.

Source: Research Australia

Citation: 2 out of 3 heart attacks and strokes in Asia (2007, January 18) retrieved 20 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2007-01-heart-asia.html>

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