

Research predicts type 2 diabetes explosion

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Health loss caused by type 2 diabetes will more than double in Australia by 2023, as health loss from most other major causes falls, according to new research by The University of Queensland's (UQ) School of Population Health.

The research, published in the January 7 edition of the *Medical Journal of Australia* assesses and predicts the burden of disease and injury in Australia from 1993 to 2023, measuring the health loss from diseases, injuries and risk factors.

Health loss is measured by the 'disability adjusted life year' (DALY) with one DALY equalling one lost year of healthy life. The DALY represents the gap between current health status and an ideal situation of the whole population living into old age.

The paper by Stephen Begg, Dr Theo Vos, Bridget Barker, Lucy Stanley and Professor Alan Lopez, reports that 75 percent of health loss is caused by cancer, cardiovascular disease, neurological and sense disorders, chronic respiratory disease and injuries.

While cardiovascular disease is the overall biggest cause of health loss in Australia, anxiety/depression is the biggest cause for women while injuries (especially for males) and mental disorders account for most DALYs in early adulthood.

Mr Begg said that DALY rates also different among various "subpopulations" of Australia, with higher health loss occurring in

disadvantaged communities.

“Health loss was more than a third (31.7 percent) higher in the lower socio-economic quintile than in the highset and 26.5 percent higher in remote areas than in major cities,” he said.

The study's authors predicted that, while many causes of health loss, including cancer, cardiovascular disease and injuries, will fall by 2023, some, including mental disorders, neurological and sense disorders (such as hearing loss), musculoskeletal disorders and type 2 diabetes, in particular, will rise over that same period.

The researchers studied 14 key risk factors for these conditions. These included tobacco use, high blood pressure, high body mass, physical inactivity and alcohol consumption.

Dr Vos said the findings emphasised that, despite steady improvements in Australia's health over the past decade, significant opportunities remain to make further progress.

“All of the health risks are open to modification through intervention,” he said.

“For example the predicted strong growth in health loss associated with diabetes is notable as it is mostly due to increased body mass.

“If new approaches to encourage Australians to maintain a healthy body weight could be as successful as the anti-smoking campaigns that have helped reduce cardiovascular disease, we may be able to reduce increasing diabetes rates.”

Professor Lopez, Head of the School of Population Health, said the paper built on previous School research, including last year's The burden

of disease and injury in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, 2003 and The burden of disease and injury in Australia, 2003, both produced for the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare.

“This kind of critical, comparable and comprehensive research is important, both to understand the magnitude and distribution of health problems in Australia, and to identify key opportunities for health gain,” he said.

“It is central to health policy decisions that offer the best opportunities for progress towards improving the health status of all Australians.”

Source: University of Queensland

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