

Teamwork, rapid data monitoring needed to improve nation's heart health

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For cardiovascular health to improve in the general population, healthcare systems will need to collect and assess treatment data, establish collaboration between researchers and healthcare professionals, and evolve patient care in real-time based on those data, according to "Achieving Optimal Population Cardiovascular Health Requires an Interdisciplinary Team and a Learning Healthcare System," a new

Scientific Statement from the American Heart Association (AHA), published today in the Association's flagship journal *Circulation*.

The progress in cardiovascular health improvements across the population has been slow, and recent mortality trends in the U.S. generate major concerns, according to the statement. In 2011, the rate of decline in cardiovascular disease mortality began slowing—indicating more deaths than the previous trends had predicted. The downward trends in deaths from [heart disease](#) and stroke also reversed course among middle-aged Americans.

"There is a need to implement innovative, integrated approaches to enhance cardiovascular health and overcome these adverse mortality trends," said Randi Foraker, Ph.D., M.A., FAHA, FAMIA, associate professor at the Institute for Informatics at Washington University's School of Medicine in St. Louis, Missouri, and chair of the writing committee for the Scientific Statement. "There are a number of evidence-based and actionable metrics for the treatment and control of heart disease risk factors. If we use the existing data that are commonly collected in [electronic health records](#) for ongoing monitoring, we could adjust health targets to complement and support the data and provide better preventive care."

Performance measures or metrics are an agreed-upon set of health factors and comprise numbers that represent "good" health. The idea is that healthcare systems work to have as many patients as possible reach these performance measures.

Healthcare systems play an important role in cardiovascular health management. "Learning" healthcare systems use [health information technology](#) to guide evidence-based care and yield continuous improvements in healthcare delivery. In a learning healthcare system, cardiovascular health metrics are measured, evaluated, implemented, and

re-evaluated. Researchers and health care professionals can get data on health metrics from sources such as patients' electronic medical records, [mobile devices](#), remote monitoring devices and wearable devices.

Improving the nation's cardiovascular health requires reinforcing prevention efforts such as non-smoking, physical activity and eating a heart-healthy diet.

Other targets to broadly improve heart health include:

- Body mass index

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