Medical Xpress

# Scientists affirm sodium reduction key to reducing heart disease

June 27 2014, by Michel Joffres

(Medical Xpress)—Simon Fraser University health sciences professor Michel Joffres is among 34 of the world's leading scientists in their field who have been brought together to affirm the benefits of reducing population sodium intake to stem heart disease.

The American Heart Association and the New York City health department this week issued a joint news release citing the scientists' consensus.

Heart disease is the leading cause of death in the U.S. and the second leading cause of death in Canada (after cancer).

An estimated 92,000 deaths could be averted annually in the U.S., the scientists say, and up to $24 billion in U.S. health care costs saved by reducing sodium intake.

"Canadian numbers are virtually the same, relative to our population," says Joffres, who has undertaken numerous studies on sodium reduction in Canada. He was also one of the lead authors of a 2013 study published in the American Heart Association journal *Hypertension*.

"We found substantial benefits when sodium was reduced from current levels to that nearer to the guideline of 2,000 to 2,300 mg per day,' says Joffres, "to the tune of an estimated 280,000 – 500,000 North American lives saved over the next decade."

The recommended daily limit of sodium intake according to government dietary guidelines is 2,300 mg per day in the U.S. and 2,000 mg per day—roughly equivalent to one teaspoon of salt—in Canada. But the vast majority of North Americans average 3,400 mg per day. And nearly 80 per cent of sodium consumption comes not from the saltshaker but from packaged and restaurant food.

The scientists say sticking to sodium intake recommendations is challenging because most of the sodium we eat comes from packaged foods.

"Decades of education and awareness about sodium reduction have not adequately moved the needle," said Elliott Antman, president-elect of the American Heart Association, noting that in order to make a difference in health, support for sodium reductions need to come from food manufacturers, food processors and the restaurant industry.

**More information:** For the complete release and the scientists' consensus statement see: at.sfu.ca/PGckCl

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Provided by Simon Fraser University

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