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Cuba: Coronary Heart Disease

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Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc. (2017). Havana, Cuba. Retrieved from <https://kids.britannica.com/students/assembly/view/54>

Location:

Cuba is an island in the North Caribbean, where the Gulf of Mexico, Atlantic Ocean, and Caribbean Sea meet. Cuba is south of Florida.

Population:

The population is 11.48 million with 76% of that population living in the urban areas. About 71.1% of the population is between the ages of 15 and 64 with 65.1% of the population being white, 24.8% being mulatto and mestizo, and finally 10.1% being black. The official language spoke is Spanish and 85% of the Cuban population is Roman Catholic (Cuba Nature and Travel).

Political Structure:

Cuba has a totalitarian communist government lead by General Raul Castro and his party of loyalists. The communist government controls all the government positions including judicial positions. The Cuban government also has a requirement that in order to hold an official position, excluding the National

Assembly, the person must be a supporter or active in the communist party. All candidates for any governmental position go through screening by the communist party (Pike).

Major Challenges Faced by the Nation:

Cuba as a nation is quite poor and despite universal health care for anyone older than 40 however, there are not nearly enough resources to treat patients. The care becomes extremely expensive leaving the lower class to not afford treatment. The technology and equipment are also not as sophisticated to treat the patients.

Major Health Issue: Coronary Heart Disease Epidemiology:

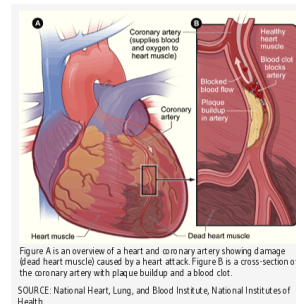
The lower class is most effected and at risk due to expensive treatment and not being able to afford it. The reason coronary heart disease is so prevalent in Cuba is due to their daily health habits. It is a mixture of decreased physical activity with tobacco use and dietary behaviors.

Background on

Coronary Heart Disease:

Cardiovascular disease is the development of plaque or inflammation that restricts the coronary blood vessels that fuel the heart with oxygen and nutrients

in the blood. Plaque is made from cholesterol and when it builds up it is called atherosclerosis. When the plaque buildup becomes so much that no blood can pass, a heart attack occurs. Coronary heart disease develops over



time. The three major symptoms of coronary heart disease include

Oregon State University. (2015), Coronary heart disease. Retrieved from <http://lpi.oregonstate.edu/mic/health-disease/coronary-heart-disease>.

angina (chest pain), shortness of breath, and an actual heart attack. Smoking specifically, but also secondhand smoke, can damage the blood vessels lining while also changing the texture of the blood to be stickier. This dramatic change in the blood vessels and blood can increase the risk of a heart attack (Oregon State University).

Coronary Heart Disease in Cuba:

In a survey taken by Cuban citizens on their food preferences, the most common food preferences tended to be white bread, ham, red meat, sodas, and

highly processed foods with fruit and vegetables overlooked and limited in their diet. However, out of all the people who participated in the survey 85%-90% believe ham and red meat are healthy (Khan). The consumption of red meat increases the risk of developing cardio-metabolic diseases such as type 2 diabetes and coronary heart disease.

In addition to the dietary patterns of Cubans increasing the risk of coronary heart disease there is also the factor of physical inactivity that has a huge impact on their heart health. It has been estimated that 53-69% of the Cuban citizens are inactive and spend the majority of their time seated (Khan). Even younger children are choosing to be sedentary and playing with technology. A study done in 2002 reported that young boys in preschool are the only group as a whole that meet the minimum daily physical activity level suggested by the CDC (Center for Disease Control) (Khan).

Finally, the frequent tobacco use of Cuban citizens plays a major role in coronary heart disease. In a study done in 2003 of

Cuban patients who had an acute myocardial infarction, a minor heart attack, at least a third of all the case control patients were caused by smoking tobacco. The CDC informs that secondhand smoke is almost as dangerous as actually smoking, and it can actually increase the risk of development of coronary heart disease by 25-30% (Center for Disease Control).

Potential

Solutions:

A plan was designed in attempts to help treat hypertension before it escalates to coronary heart disease and it involves the patient taking medication and having a doctor for hypertension. In order to promote healthy eating local gardening was initiated by Cuban national governments and has increased the amount of vegetables eaten.

Though Cuba has a universal health care system the main problem is lacking resources for treatment. Improving the treatment of hypertension and other illnesses related to or a precursor to coronary heart disease will allow for a possible decrease in coronary heart disease deaths in Cuba. However, prevention is a key focus and in this case

the preventative measures that need to be taken is to decrease the amount of cigarettes smoked, introduce more low-fat and low sodium diets including a greater portion of fruits and vegetables, and staying active and moving.

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