

### The Cost of Coronary Heart Disease to Society

- CHD is caused when the coronary arteries that supply the cells in the heart walls with oxygen narrow, this is called arteriosclerosis. This can lead onto a
- heart attack, caused when one of these arteries becomes completely blocked and stops the blood supply to the heart muscle; this can be directly caused by arteriosclerosis or by the formation of a blood clot, blocked the arteries. The causes include:
  - Smoking cigarettes
  - High blood pressure
  - Unhealthy diet
  - Lack of exercise
  - Obesity
  - Diabetes
  - Stress
  - Family history of the disease
- The cost of coronary heart disease to society cannot be viewed in terms of just financial, but also the loss to society of 140,500 lives every year, this figure is the number of people who died of coronary heart disease in 1997 in the UK. The figure in 2000 however had fallen to 125,000.
- Coronary heart disease rates in the UK are one of the highest in the world and it is the biggest causer of premature death. In 1997 over 64,000 women and over 76,500 men died due to coronary heart disease, roughly 16 people every hour. The NHS spends over £1,750 million a year relating to coronary heart disease, with 34% of this figure being spent on drugs and dispensing them and just 1% spent on the primary prevention of CHD.
- It is estimated that one in every four men and one in every six women die due to coronary heart disease, taking the whole of Europe into consideration, coronary heart disease is the single biggest killer, with nearly 2 million people a year dying.
- As well as the NHS budget of £1, 750 million, a further £5,300 million is lost because of days off work due to illness, death or caring of people who have the disease; an estimated 70 million working days are lost per year. So in total, CHD costs the UK economy over £7,000 million per year- a loss of about £117 per person in the UK.
- Heart disease has become such a wide spread problem in the UK it has been recognised as a public health issue, with steps being taken to help prevent coronary heart disease and to warn people of the dangers and the causes of coronary heart disease.
- Not only does coronary heart disease affect those people who fall ill, it also affects those who have to cope with the stress of looking after those that are ill. This could include more than one extra family member off of work because of the care required to nurse people better.
- Someone who smokes is ten times more likely to suffer from CHD than someone who does not, because of this many members of the public may feel
- that those that have the illness have brought it on themselves and should

therefore have to pay for the treatment themselves, rather than to rely on the NHS and therefore the general public through taxes, to pay for the costs, such as nurse's and doctors wages, treatment and medication. This can cause conflict in the community and prejudice against those who have contracted illnesses from smoking. Also, some surgeons refuse to operate on patients who smoke and will continue to do so until said patient quits smoking, again this can cause some social rifts.

- Also as cigarette smoking can cause CHD, it is not only those who smoke that could be affected but also people who breathe in the cigarette smoke. This is causing social conflict in public places already, and is often frowned upon because of the health risk associated with breathing in secondary cigarette smoke.

It is, although, unlikely that CHD or any other disease associated with passive smoking unless exposed to the smoke for frequent long periods of time, the health risks are still there. This fact is what causes people feel uncomfortable when being in the presence of someone smoking and breathing in cigarette smoke.

So, not only do people who smoke, pay for their cigarettes, but they are also paying for their treatment from the NHS via their taxes.

- Stress is also a cause, and it has been suggested by scientific research, that as the number of people working in the UK increases, as does the number of years each person works, increases the risk of contracting CHD. People who have a higher risk of getting the disease are those that work in low paid clerical jobs.

- In the UK more than 2.6 million people suffer with coronary heart disease, and one person every two minutes dies of a heart attack, this has a huge impact on people's lives.

- The economic costs that have been calculated refer only to the health care costs and loss of earnings, it does not include the costs that families have to pay when having to deal with the loss of a relative. With the average cost of a funeral estimated at £1,347, and when in the year 2000 125,000 people died from CHD, the estimated total money spent on their funerals is £168,375,000. The cost of the funeral will have an impact on the people who have to pay for its lives, when this money could have been spent on something more pleasant as apposed to a funeral.

Not only is there the cost of society to consider, but also the cost to the individual who suffers with coronary heart disease. Working days that are spent at home mean a loss of income if ill on sick leave for a long period time, or possibly total loss of the job.

There is also possible added stress of being unable to work, this could worsen the symptoms of the illness and therefore cause the patient to be on sick leave for a longer period of time, therefore losing the UK economy money and also the families income.

- Not only is the stress added by incapability to work, but there is also the physical pain connected with the disease relating to angina. The symptoms for this can include tightness in the chest, neck and arms and also shortness of breath. Not only must this be a frightening experience but this could also worsen the symptoms by causing panic and fear.

In conclusion, CHD covers many different aspects to society and causes many problems, mainly the cost to the UK economy and the amount of money spent by the NHS treating people who have CHD and also the social problems it causes between relatives and the general public towards one another.

Bibliography: Books

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