
Most People Do Not Know the Impact of Heart Disease



Over half of the U.S. population (51%) remains unaware that heart disease is the leading cause of death, as per a recent Harris Poll survey conducted by the American Heart Association. This lack of awareness persists despite heart disease maintaining its status as the number one killer for over a century. Heart Disease and Stroke Statistics report from the American Heart Association is published in *Circulation*.

Dr Joseph C Wu, volunteer president of the American Heart Association and director of the Stanford Cardiovascular Institute, highlights the gravity of this issue. For a century now, heart disease has been the primary cause of death in the U.S. This, coupled with stroke ranking as the fifth leading cause of death, surpasses the combined toll of all cancer forms and chronic lower respiratory diseases, as per the latest available data. It's thus disheartening and alarming that a significant portion of the population remains unaware of the profound impact of heart disease.

The survey reveals startling gaps in awareness: 49% correctly identified heart disease as the leading cause of death, while 16% admitted uncertainty, and 18% erroneously attributed the top spot to cancer.

This lack of awareness could have life-threatening implications given the fact that nearly half of all Americans (48.6%) suffer from some form of cardiovascular disease (CVD). High blood pressure afflicts 46.7% of U.S. adults, but 38% remain unaware of their condition. High blood pressure is a significant risk factor for heart disease and stroke. However, with proper management, its effects can be mitigated, substantially lowering the risk of CVD. However, awareness is the crucial first step in addressing any cardiovascular risk factor, explains Dr Wu.

Some key achievements in the fight against cardiovascular disease outlined in the report include:

- A 60% decline in death rates from CVD since 1950, albeit recent fluctuations correlating with a surge in risk factors like high blood pressure and obesity.
- A decrease in annual heart attack fatalities, from 1 in 2 during the 1950s to 1 in 8.5 presently, attributed partly to enhanced diagnostics and treatment.
- The decline of stroke mortality, once the third leading cause of death, now ranks fifth in the U.S., owing to robust evidence-based public health initiatives and clinical interventions.
- A substantial reduction in cigarette smoking, championed by the American Heart Association through awareness campaigns and policy measures, with current rates plummeting to around 11%.

With cardiovascular disease continuing to affect a large number of people, it is important to recognise its impact and the need for collective action.

Source: [American Heart Association](#)

Image Credit: iStock

Published on : Tue, 30 Jan 2024