

## The Cardiovascular Legacy of COVID-19



As the world continues to struggle through the COVID-19 pandemic, an area of concern is the increasing burden of cardiovascular disease. CVD was already an area of concern before the coronavirus outbreak since it is the leading cause of death in the world. However, the pandemic has made the outlook for CVD even more gloomy.

Approximately 60 million people in the European Union suffer from cardiovascular disease. Nearly 13 million new cases of CVD are diagnosed every year and CVD accounts for almost 36% of all deaths. It is also a major cause of premature death. Around 20% of the mortality caused by CVD before the age of 65 is found in the EU.

The link between COVID-19 and cardiovascular disease is now clearly established. Heart disease has been found to be the most common pre-existing health condition in people who die from coronavirus. COVID-19 triggers an inflammatory response that damages the heart and blood vessels. It also increases the risk of blood clotting which could potentially lead to heart attacks, strokes and pulmonary embolism.

During the lockdown period, emergency hospital admissions for heart attack and stroke have halved. This suggests that many patients with cardiovascular disease are either suffering at home, or are at risk of developing complications, or are dying. Postponement of heart surgeries and other elective procedures is also contributing to the increase in preventable death and disability.

What should be done? The important thing now is to ensure that mortality and mortality due to cardiovascular disease do not skyrocket.

The European Society of Cardiology (ESC) and the European Heart Network (EHN) have launched "Fighting cardiovascular disease - a blueprint for EU action." The goal of this initiative is to implement bold and urgent action by the EU to address the increasing burden of CVD in the context of COVID-19.

European Health Commissioner Stella Kyriakides said: "Cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of death in EU and the world. The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of well-functioning health systems and the need for us to take action. The new stand-alone EU4Health programme is a game-changer, putting health as priority for the EU and rising to the challenges posed by the pandemic. It will address the needs of those living with cardiovascular and other non-communicable diseases."

Prof Barbara Casadei, President of the ESC added: "The COVID-19 crisis has shown that the availability of accurate and rapidly accessible patient data can inform health policies in an emergency and avoid preventable death and disability. This must be achieved across Europe through the development of harmonised continuous patient registries and the digitisation of our health systems. Such data would also allow effective monitoring of the safety of medical devices, increase the speed and efficiency of randomised controlled trials, and thus, of access to new treatments, and bring industry investment to Europe."

EHN President, Floris Italianer affirmed: "Because of the scale of the disease and the many risk factors and lifestyle determinants, cardiovascular disease is best described as a societal disease. As such, effective regulation and population-wide interventions are necessary to prevent it. Improvements in cardiovascular patients' care and treatment are also needed. The EU has the competence and the tools to act, we just need the political will. A strong push to address Europe's leading cause of death will in turn lead to better human and economic outcomes with considerable returns on investment."

Source: [ESC](#)

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