

Economic Implications of Preventive Cardiology : Indian Perspective

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Abstract

India, which had been fighting the problems of infectious and nutritional diseases in the past is now facing the challenge of cardiovascular diseases (CVDs) such as hypertension (HTN), coronary artery disease (CAD), type 2 diabetes mellitus (T2DM), stroke, obesity and metabolic syndrome. It is well known that south Asians are more prone to vascular diseases mainly HTN, CAD, T2DM and stroke. These diseases have now slowly but steadily crept into the poorer segments of the society and that too amongst the most productive and working force of the country. Number of people affected with HTN, CAD, T2DM, stroke, and rheumatic heart disease (RHD) works out to be around 268.7 million based on current prevalence and 2001 census. RHD with its attendant complications continues to be our problem. Unfortunately, the number of studies that report health costs of these diseases is quite few in India. This article tries to address this issue with regard to the economic burden of CVDs in India and provides an overview of the resultant economic loss if they are not timely prevented.

According to the most conservative estimate the approximate cost of treating CVDs diseases particularly HTN, CAD, T2DM, stroke, and RHD, in India would be around Rs 3178.1 billion whereas if simple and practical life style measures are adopted to prevent these diseases the burden would be reduced to a mere Rs 615.7 billion. This huge saving of Rs. 2562.4 billion will provide an answer to the big question: what is best: Prevention or Cure? Lest we adopt preventive measures right now at community and individual levels the direct and indirect health economic toll due to man days lost and social support will be devastating for our economy. Further, the economical implications of obesity, metabolic syndrome and stroke in the population < 40 years mandate in depth research.

Key words: Economics of prevention, coronary artery disease, hypertension, type 2 diabetes mellitus, stroke, metabolic syndrome, rheumatic heart disease.