

EDITORIAL

NON-COMMUNICABLE DISEASES: A GLOBAL PUBLIC HEALTH THREAT

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Noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) are a group of chronic illnesses that cannot be transmitted from person to person. But they are silent killer that they take life away without any aching symptoms^{1,2}. The NCDs, including heart disease, stroke, cancer, diabetes and chronic lung disease, are collectively responsible for 74% of all deaths worldwide. More than three-quarters of all NCD deaths, and 86% of the 17 million people who died prematurely, or before reaching 70 years of age, occur in low- and middle-income countries. The NCDs are killing people at ages when they can be most useful for the society. The epidemiological shift from infectious diseases to the NCDs in low and middle income countries are suffering from 80% fatalities due to these diseases. Cardiovascular diseases account for most NCD deaths, or at least 19 million deaths in 2021, followed by cancers (10 million), chronic respiratory diseases (4 million), and diabetes (over 2 million including kidney disease deaths caused by diabetes)^{3,4}. Astonishing that 90 % of all death in Europe is due to NCDs⁵. WHO estimates yearly premature deaths from all NCDs to increase to 3,8 million in 2030, or 51 % of premature mortality, in sub-Saharan Africa alone⁶. The impact of NCDs in Nepal is overwhelming. An estimated 71% of total deaths in the country were due to NCDs. Inclusive of deaths due to injuries, the figure staggers to 80%⁷. According to UNICEF, Nepal, burden of Disease shows the proportion of deaths due to NCDs rose from 31.3 per cent in 1990 to a whopping 71.1 per cent in 2019^{8,9}. The recorded NCD cases in 2024¹⁰ in Nepal are 30330 Cardiovascular, 584387 Diabetes Miletus, COPD 259110 and Cancer 97387. Both factors behavioral factors (lack of physical activity, tobacco use, excess salt sugar and fats) as well as metabolic factors (hypertension, obesity, diabetes, hyperlipidemia etc.) are responsible for NCDs. The NCDs are major cause of death in most low and middle income countries as well as globally. Only in 2024, NCDs are responsible for 35 million (60 %) deaths by 2030, they will be the primary cause of disability worldwide^{4,10,11}. Tobacco accounts for over 7.2 million deaths, excess salt/sodium intake 4.1 million deaths, 3.3 million annual deaths attributable to alcohol use are from NCDs, including cancer, 1.6 million deaths annually can be attributed to insufficient physical activity every year. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development recognizes NCDs as a major challenge for sustainable development. In summary, NCDs constitute a serious worldwide health issue that calls for an all-encompassing strategy. We may endeavor to lessen the burden of NCDs and enhance health outcomes for people and communities around the world by addressing the underlying causes of NCDs mentioned above.

FURTHER READING

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