

HEALTH CARE COSTS OF CARDIOVASCULAR CONDITIONS

Direct health care costs of cardiovascular disease rank equal first with diseases of the digestive system as the most expensive disease group in Australia.

Following is an overview of the direct health care costs associated with cardiovascular disease in Australia for the period 1993–94. Indirect costs, such as lost production due to sickness and premature death, are not included. As such, the figures presented here do not estimate the full economic impact of cardiovascular disease in Australia.

COST OF CARDIOVASCULAR DISEASE

The total direct cost of cardiovascular disease in Australia during 1993–94 was \$3,719 million. This represented 12% of total health costs and made it the most expensive disease group. The cost of digestive system diseases was equally expensive (\$3,715 million). Costs related to musculoskeletal conditions ranked next (\$3,002 million). These were followed by injury, mental disorders and respiratory conditions (each around \$2,600 million).

DID YOU *know*?

- The average treatment cost for a heart attack in 1993–94 was around \$5,000.
- The average lifetime health care cost of stroke is around \$26,000 per sufferer in 1993–94.
- During 1993–94, public and private hospital costs due to cardiovascular diseases totalled \$1.5 billion. For the same period, over \$700 million was spent on drugs for the treatment and prevention of cardiovascular diseases.

Sex

Overall, there is no difference between males and females for the total costs of cardiovascular disease. During 1993–94, costs were around \$1,850 million for each sex. Costs do vary between males and females for individual cardiovascular conditions.

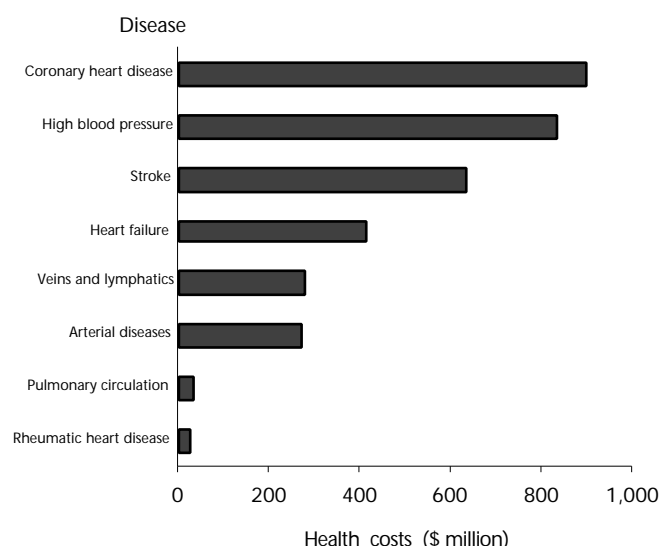
Total costs of coronary heart disease were higher for males (\$560 million) than for females (under \$340 million). The opposite was true for high blood pressure, stroke and heart failure. Females accounted for high blood pressure costs of \$500 million compared with males at \$335 million. Stroke costs for females were nearly \$350 million compared with males at \$280 million. Costs of heart failure for females were nearly \$250 million compared with males at \$170 million.

Age

Costs related to cardiovascular disease rise steeply with age from 40 years onwards. During 1993–94, total costs of cardiovascular disease were about \$900 million for females over 75 years. For males over 70 years, the total costs of cardiovascular disease were around \$600 million.

CORONARY HEART DISEASE

The most expensive of all cardiovascular diseases was coronary heart disease. At \$894 million this was 24% of total cardiovascular disease costs. The majority of costs were related to hospital inpatients. Public hospital costs were over \$410 million. Private hospital costs were nearly \$150 million. The next most expensive health service was the cost of prescription drugs at nearly \$100 million.



Source: Mathers & Penm 1999.

Health care costs for cardiovascular diseases, 1993–94

HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE

More is spent on research relating to high blood pressure than on any individual cardiovascular disease. At an estimated \$22 million, these research costs were double the next closest, costs for coronary heart disease research, and over three times more than the costs of stroke research.

HEART FAILURE

The total health system cost of heart failure were \$411 million (11% of cardiovascular disease costs). The majority of these were hospital inpatient costs (\$140 million) and nursing home costs (\$135 million). Public hospital care costs around \$120 million and private hospital costs were just over \$20 million.

STROKE

Total health system costs for stroke were \$630 million (17% of cardiovascular disease costs). The majority of costs were hospital inpatient costs (\$269 million). Nursing home services provided the other major area of expenditure, representing almost half of all stroke health service costs at \$265 million.

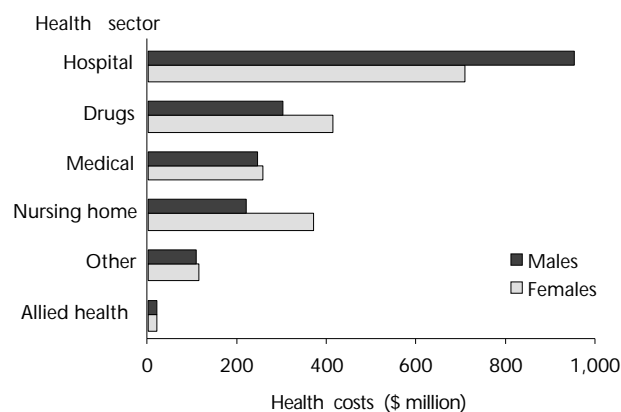
DIABETES

Like high blood cholesterol, diabetes significantly increases the risk of cardiovascular disease. Cardiovascular complications caused by diabetes cost \$223 million during 1993–94. The complications caused by diabetes include stroke (\$75 million), coronary heart disease (\$68 million), heart failure (\$37 million), high blood pressure (\$32 million) and peripheral vascular disease and atherosclerosis (\$10 million).

COSTS BY HEALTH SERVICE

In 1993–94, hospitals and nursing homes were responsible for the majority of health service costs for cardiovascular disease (\$2,240 million). The next most expensive service was the cost of drugs. Prescription and non-prescription drugs were less than one-third the cost of hospitals and nursing homes (\$715 million). Medical services ranked third most expensive (\$500 million).

These include consultations with general practitioners and specialists as well as pathology tests, screening and other diagnostic services. The least expensive services included administration, research and prevention programs and allied health practitioners (totalling \$258 million).



Notes

1. Excluding high blood cholesterol costs.
2. Other includes administration, research and prevention program costs.

Source: Mathers & Penm 1999.

Health care costs of cardiovascular diseases by health sector, 1993–94

FURTHER INFORMATION

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Detailed data

Refer to the Statistical tables section.

Main data sources

Mathers C & Penm R 1999. Health system costs of cardiovascular diseases and diabetes in Australia 1993–94. AIHW Cat. No. HWE 11. Canberra: AIHW.

References/further reading

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) 1998. Australia's health 1998: the sixth biennial health report of the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. AIHW Cat. No. AUS 10. HWE 11. Canberra: AIHW.

Mathers C & Penm R 1999. Health system costs of cardiovascular diseases and diabetes in Australia 1993–94. AIHW Cat. No. HWE11. Canberra: AIHW.