

Health Politics with Dr. Mike Magee

Cardiovascular Disease: Still Our #1 Killer Ⓜ

by Mike Magee, MD

(NAPSA)—If you're searching for the leading cause of disability in the United States, you don't have to look far. It's cardiovascular disease. Forty percent of all deaths are cardiovascular in nature, and this year there were more than one million heart attacks in this country.



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Yet Americans have become amazingly complacent about heart disease and stroke—mostly because we've made such great progress in fighting cardiovascular disease in recent years.

Millions of Americans are simply unaware that cardiovascular disease, in the form of heart attacks and strokes, is still a threat and will likely present a serious health challenge sometime in their lives.

This complacency means new cardiovascular trouble is clearly brewing for our society. The rate of decrease in cardiovascular death is slowing. Cases of heart failure and stroke are on the rise. Fewer young people have healthy lifestyles, with two-thirds of Americans at 40 now showing some blockage of their coronary arteries by plaque.

Recent studies show that we Americans overestimate, by a large degree, our cardiovascular health. Seventy-six percent say they try to maintain a healthy weight, but only 36 percent really

do. Sixty-eight percent say they try to avoid high-fat, high-cholesterol foods, but only 10 percent follow national nutrition guidelines.

What's clear is that we're in cardiovascular denial. Fifty-seven percent of Americans do not believe they're at much risk for cardiovascular disease, despite the overwhelming evidence to the contrary.

The famous preventative cardiologist Dr. Paul Dudley White once said, "Heart disease before 80: It's man's fault, not God or Nature's will." He was right then. He's still right today.

What to do? First, ask your doctor for information on how to maintain a healthy heart. Second, keep track of a few crucial numbers—your weight and blood pressure, cholesterol and blood sugar levels. Third, involve your family in better health—create a smoke-free home, improve nutrition for everyone, watch less TV indoors, get more exercise outdoors.

With cardiovascular disease, we've made great progress. It would be unfortunate to let those gains slip away.

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For more information on cardiovascular disease or to receive a free weekly health report from Dr. Magee, visit the Web site at www.HealthPolitics.com.