



Chronic Diseases: Exploding the Myths



Myth: Chronic diseases are a problem of the rich countries.

Fact: Chronic noncommunicable diseases (CNCDs) account for more than half the burden of disease and 80% of deaths in poorer countries, which carry a double disease burden.

Myth: CNCDs are a problem only of the elderly.

Fact: Half of these diseases occur in adults under 70 years of age, and the problems often begin in the young, e.g. obesity.

Myth: CNCDs affect men more than women.

Fact: CNCDs affect women and men almost equally and globally. Heart disease is the leading cause of death in women.



Myth: CNCDs cannot be prevented.

Fact: If the known risk factors are controlled, at least 80% of heart disease, stroke and diabetes and 40% of cancers are preventable; in addition, there are cost-effective interventions available for control.

Myth: People with CNCDs are at fault and to be blamed because of their unhealthy lifestyles.

Fact: Individual responsibility, while important, only has full effect where people have equal access to healthy choices. Governments have a crucial role to play in altering the social environment to help make the healthy choice the easy choice.

Myth: "My grandfather smoked and lived to 90 years." "Everyone has to die of something."

Fact: While some people who smoke will live a normal lifespan, the majority will have shorter, poorer-quality lives. And yes, everyone has to die, but death does not need to be slow, painful or premature, as is so often the case with CNCDs.