Global Epidemics of Heart Failure

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Heart failure (HF) is a global epidemic affecting an estimated 26 million people worldwide. In the United States, HF affects over 5 million people, and in 2009, 1 of every 9 deaths included HF as a diagnosis, reflecting 8% of the deaths attributable to cardiovascular disease (CVD). Approximately 1–2% of the adult population in developed countries has HF, with the prevalence rising to ≥10% among persons 70 years of age or older. There are many causes of HF, and these vary in different geographic regions of the world. HF with reduced ejection fraction (HFrEF) affects approximately half of the population with HF, with coronary artery disease, hypertension and diabetes being significant risk factors world-wide. In economically developing regions, the prevalence of HF is increasing as a result of a shift toward a more Western lifestyle. Infections remain a common cause of HF in many countries. The economic impact of HF is profound. Considering data from 197 countries which includes over 98% of the world's population, the overall economic cost of HF in 2012 was estimated at $108 billion per year. Direct costs accounted for ~60% ($65 billion) and indirect costs accounted for ~40% ($43 billion) of the overall spend. Global per capita spending in 2012 was approximately $24/year. Efforts at population health improvement will serve to prevent the development of HF as will public awareness campaigns with a focus on HF. Clinical practice guidelines published by professional societies around the globe all focus on the diagnosis, treatment and long-term management of patients with HF. Issues involving access to care vary from region to region and need to be addressed in order to provide patients with evidence-based therapies. Best practices informing efforts in access and patient adherence are needed to provide patients with life-saving treatment. Likewise, public policy is needed in all countries to support such programs.