

5 Ways Heart Health Care Can Improve

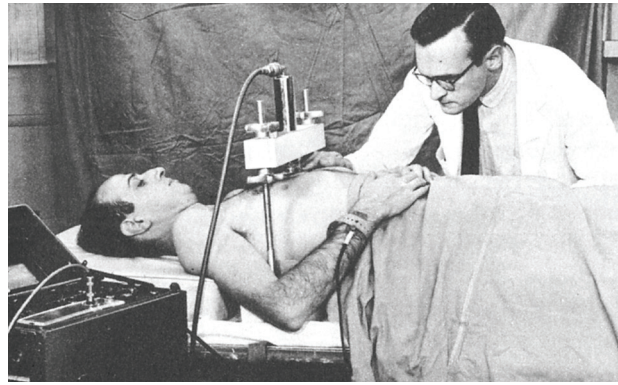
FAMILY FEATURES

Before the advent of antibiotics, infectious diseases, such as pneumonia, tuberculosis and diphtheria, were the most common causes of death in the industrialized world. Today, heart disease is the leading cause of death in the United States, and has been since 1921, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

However, more than half of people in the U.S. (51%) aren't aware of that fact, according to a Harris Poll survey conducted on behalf of the American Heart Association. What's more, nearly half of all people in the U.S. (48.6%) have some type of cardiovascular disease (CVD), including coronary heart disease, heart failure, stroke or, most notably, high blood pressure, according to the annual statistical update, "2024 Heart Disease and Stroke Statistics: A Report of U.S. and Global Data From the American Heart Association," published in "Circulation."

"Heart disease along with stroke, which is the fifth-leading cause of death, claim more lives in the U.S. than all forms of cancer and chronic lower respiratory disease combined, based on the most recent data available," said Joseph C. Wu, M.D., Ph.D., FAHA, volunteer president of the American Heart Association, director of the Stanford Cardiovascular Institute and the Simon H. Stertzer Professor of Medicine and Radiology at Stanford School of Medicine. "Finding that most people do not know the significant impact of heart disease is discouraging and even a bit frightening."

While death rates from CVD have declined 60% since 1950 and the number of people in the U.S. dying from heart attack has



dropped from 1 in 2 in the '50s to about 1 in 8 today, challenges still remain.

In 2024, with Bold Hearts – the American Heart Association's centennial celebration – the organization celebrates 100 years of progress and identified several issues that must be addressed to make the next century of life-saving work as impactful as the first 100 years:

- **Scientific literacy** must be enhanced to increase public knowledge and understanding about the methods and interpretation of scientific data.
- **Non-traditional approaches** to health care are needed to address the social and structural determinants of health by moving evidence-based approaches rapidly into communities to address food insecurity, transportation problems, education, housing, access to care, chronic psychosocial stress and other social needs.

- **The interconnectedness of organ systems**, mechanisms of disease and stages of life are critical to understanding the role cardiovascular health plays in overall health.

- **Appreciation of systems** of care will be important to achieving significant clinical benefits. Reliance on individual physicians may not be realistic in managing diseases involving multiple organ systems such as cardiovascular-kidney-metabolic disease or disorders affecting the heart, brain and mind simultaneously.

- **More funding for research** is a critical need due to the pace of scientific advances. In the next century, laboratory experiments may demand more sophisticated equipment, translational science will incorporate expensive new technologies like artificial intelligence and population health will require greater computing power and larger sample sizes.

"There is much to learn from this historic shift in the reduction of deaths from infectious diseases and the current prevalence in deaths from cardiovascular diseases," Wu said. "Through scientific research, technological advances and public health policy, most of these infectious diseases have become controlled, and many have been or are nearly eradicated. As we apply these same clinical and epidemiological methods to the someday hopeful eradication of heart disease and stroke, the American Heart Association is making great progress. Although still too many people die each year, many are living longer, more productive lives while managing their cardiovascular disease and risk factors."

To learn more, visit heart.org/centennial.

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55-59	55.31	42.57	81.97	62.85	108.62	83.13	135.28	103.42
60-64	64.31	50.40	95.46	74.60	126.62	98.79	157.77	122.99
65-69	78.89	62.14	117.33	92.21	155.77	122.29	194.21	152.36
70-74	104.29	82.22	155.44	122.33	206.58	162.44	257.73	202.54
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