

ISSUE

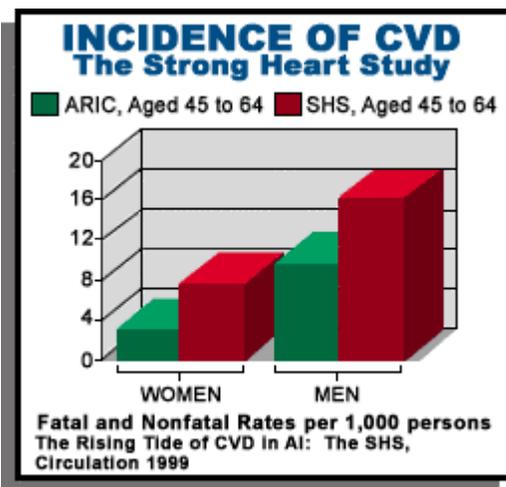
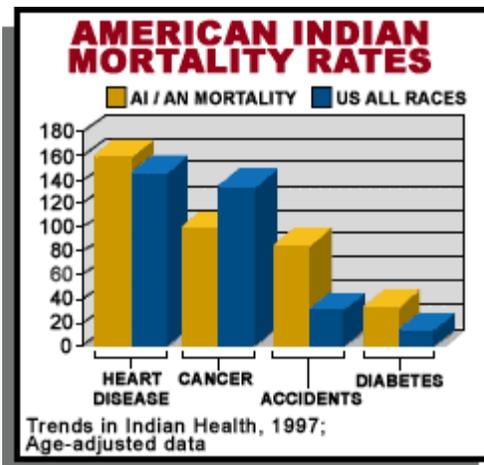
Cardiovascular Disease (CVD) used to be rare among American Indians and Alaska Natives. The current rates of coronary heart disease (including acute myocardial infarction and unstable angina) are rapidly and dramatically increasing. CVD has now become the leading cause of death among American Indians and Alaska Natives.

BACKGROUND

As recently as 40 years ago, the rates of CVD in American Indians and Alaska Natives were exceedingly low, due to a history of low rates of cardiovascular risk factors, including diabetes, hypertension, and hypercholesterolemia. However, over the past several decades, the incidence and prevalence of these risk factors has risen significantly. The development of an epidemic of diabetes and markedly increased rates of other cardiovascular risk factors has resulted in a marked increase in the incidence and prevalence of CVD in American Indian and Alaska Native people.

SITUATION

The rate of CVD in the general U.S. population has declined more than 50% since 1968. However, the rate of CVD among American Indians and Alaska Natives has risen significantly over this same period, with rates now occurring at almost twice the rate for the general population. Besides creating a significant negative impact on the quality of life for many of the affected individuals, the expenditures for the provision of preventative and therapeutic interventions have grown substantially. In addition, the mortality from CVD among Indian people has now actually surpassed that of the general population. The Indian Health Service (IHS) has developed multiple initiatives to improve the burden of cardiovascular risk factor as well as prevent the development of CVD among American Indians and Alaska Natives. In addition, the IHS has developed a focused regional cardiovascular subspecialty program located within the University of Arizona to directly focus on this issue from a therapeutic and preventative perspective, with positive significant results in terms of quality of care, cost savings and prevention activities.



OPTIONS/PLANS

The IHS is supporting both direct and tribally directed community activities in the prevention of CVD and its risk factors among American Indians and Alaska Natives. Numerous activities are underway to continue the provision of the highest quality primary care and preventative activities by providers. In addition, the development of additional focused subspecialty cardiovascular centers collaborating with academic institutions is being supported and pursued.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

For referral to the appropriate spokesperson, contact the IHS Public Affairs Staff at 301-443-3593.