

AUSTRALIAN CHRONIC DISEASE PREVENTION ALLIANCE



MEDIA RELEASE

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New data highlights social inequalities in chronic disease

New data from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare shows that the gap between the lowest and highest socioeconomic groups continues to widen for heart disease, stroke, diabetes and chronic kidney disease.

Rates of heart attack and stroke increased with socioeconomic disadvantage, as did the number of people living with diabetes or chronic kidney disease.

Chair of the Australian Chronic Disease Prevention Alliance Sharon McGowan said that the data revealed stark inequities in health status amongst Australians.

“While there have been some improvements in recent years, these are not reflected across the board. Lower levels of income, education, housing and socioeconomic area are all aligned with poorer health,” said Ms McGowan.

Heart attack rates were more than 1.5 times as high in both males and females from the lowest socioeconomic areas compared to the highest, while deaths from chronic kidney disease were at least 1.6 times as high. Diabetes deaths were more than 2 times as high in the lowest socioeconomic areas compared to the highest.

Heart attack, stroke, diabetes and chronic kidney disease share similar risk factors and interact to increase risk. Unhealthy weight and poor diet are higher in areas of socioeconomic disadvantage, and the built environments in these areas often promote unhealthy choices.

The Australian Chronic Disease Prevention Alliance is calling on the Government to target these health disparities by increasing the focus on prevention and supporting targeted health checks to proactively manage risk.

“Government investment is essential to encourage health checks, improve understanding of the risk factors for chronic disease, and implement policies and programs to reduce chronic disease risk, particularly in areas of socioeconomic disadvantage,” said Ms McGowan.

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The Australian Chronic Disease Prevention Alliance (ACDPA) is an alliance of Cancer Council Australia; Diabetes Australia; National Heart Foundation of Australia; Kidney Health Australia; and Stroke Foundation. Members work together to collectively advocate for prevention, integrated risk assessment and effective management of chronic disease risk.