

AHA Sets New Goals in Cardiovascular Health

BY MARY ANN MOON

The American Heart Association will broaden its focus to promoting cardiovascular health, in addition to its long-standing aim of reducing heart disease and stroke mortality, according to a special report.

The organization has adopted a new goal for the coming decade: "By 2020, to improve the cardiovascular health of all Americans by 20% while reducing deaths from cardiovascular diseases and stroke by 20%," said Dr. Donald M. Lloyd-Jones and his associates on the AHA strategic planning task force and statistics committee.

The special report "details the commission, underlying rationale, processes, and recommendations of the committee, which outline bold new strategic directions for the AHA."

The AHA aims, 'by 2020, to improve the cardiovascular health of all Americans by 20% while reducing deaths from cardiovascular diseases and stroke by 20%.'

The report recommends that the AHA take on a more proactive role, emphasizing health promotion, cardiovascular disease (CVD) prevention, and improvement of quality of life, "rather than solely treating disease," said Dr. Lloyd-Jones, chair of preventive medicine at Northwestern University, Chicago, and his colleagues.

The report also recommends that the AHA address the prevention of stroke and all CVD, not just coronary disease, and focus for the first time on congenital heart disease, nonfatal cardiovascular events, and health disparities (Circulation 2010 Jan. 20 [doi:10.1161/circulationaha.192703]).

As a first step in this effort, the committee established definitions of poor, intermediate, and ideal cardiovascular health.

The report also described goals in seven domains that are key to optimal cardiovascular health—"Life's Simple 7"—noting that if Americans improve these factors, their quality of life will improve, their life spans will increase, and the financial burden on the U.S. health care system will be dramatically reduced.

Specifically, Life's Simple 7 are:

- ▶ Never smoked or quit smoking more than 1 year ago.
- ▶ Body mass index less than 25 kg/m².
- ▶ Physical activity at least 150 minutes (moderate intensity) or 75 minutes (vigorous intensity) per week.
- ▶ Healthy diet.
- ▶ Total cholesterol less than 200 mg/dL.
- ▶ Blood pressure less than 120/80 mm Hg.
- ▶ Fasting blood glucose less than 100 mg/dL.

"If we reach people in middle age and even younger with this message, we could change American health for the better for decades to come," Dr. Lloyd-Jones commented in a statement issued by the AHA.

The AHA developed its 2020 goals and Life's Simple 7 after extensively reviewing the literature on cardiovascular health.

It became clear that more work needs

to be done "to arrest or reverse a rising tide of CVD events due to the aging of the population and ongoing adverse levels of unhealthy behaviors (dietary imbalance, physical inactivity, smoking) and unhealthy risk factors (adverse blood lipids, high blood pressure, diabetes, obesity)," the report said.

The full report, including specific dietary and physical activity goals to promote

cardiovascular health, is available at <http://circ.ahajournals.org/cgi/content/full/121/4/586>. Patients can assess their own cardiovascular health using a new AHA online resource at www.heart.org/MyLifeCheck.

Disclosures: Dr. Lloyd-Jones had no financial conflicts to disclose. The potential conflicts of all the committee members are included in the report.

For patients with
type 2 diabetes whose
blood glucose control
is not on track
with orals alone

**“YOU MAY WANT TO
HAVE THE INSULIN
TALK SOONER”**



“By the time of diagnosis, up to 50% of patients’ beta-cell function may have been lost.”⁴