

Brain disorders cause as much health loss as cardiovascular disease, study shows

More than 15% of all health loss is associated with brain conditions, according to latest results of an ongoing study presented at EAN 2023 Congress

BUDAPEST, HUNGARY, July 2, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- More than 15% of all health loss is associated with brain conditions, according to the latest results of an [ongoing study that will be presented](#) on Sunday, 2 July at EAN 2023, the 9th Annual Congress of the European Academy of Neurology (EAN) in Budapest, Hungary.



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Shayla Smith

In 2021 alone, brain conditions led to as much health loss as cardiovascular disease, with 406 million disability-adjusted life years (DALYs) of full health lost vs. 402 million DALYs. The loss was significantly higher than cancer, which

was responsible for 260 million DALYs, new data from the Global Burden of Disease (GBD) study show.

Since 1990, Alzheimer's disease cases and the number of strokes have increased by 178% and 98%, respectively.

Growth of aging populations

While many factors can cause brain disorders, one significant driver is the aging population, according to Shayla Smith MPH, an epidemiologist and Client Services Engagement Manager at the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME) at the University of Washington. IHME has coordinated the GBD study since 2007.

“The burden of brain conditions will increase as populations continue to grow and age. By 2050, more than 50 million people will be aged 65 to 79,” she said. “The COVID-19 pandemic has also influenced the prevalence of mental disorders globally, as people were forced to isolate and social networks broke down. We are looking at other drivers of brain disorders such as education level, obesity, and smoking.”

The burden caused by brain disease is challenging healthcare systems, employers, and families to respond, according to the IHME, which is leveraging over 200,000 data sources to produce population-based time trends for health outcomes in every country in the Global Burden of Disease study.

In a preliminary analysis, the institute calculated that, to date, globally \$1.22 trillion is lost in income for people living with brain disorders and \$1.14 trillion is spent on direct healthcare costs related to brain disorders.

“Data such as that derived from our study, and associated efforts, are critical to informing evidence-based planning and resource allocation,” she said. “We expect the burden to increase in the coming years, creating new challenges for health systems, employers, patients, and families.”

New treatments could buck the trend

To date, the healthcare workforce lacks sufficient staff to care for the aging population globally. In some places, shortages of specialists is also an issue, with only a few neurologists available in certain low- and middle-income countries.

On the bright side, new therapies could help alleviate some of the burden caused by brain disease. “The impact of brain conditions such as stroke has decreased since the 1990s due to improved treatments available,” Smith said. “Our goal is to see an improved prevention and treatment landscape for other brain conditions and reverse the growing health loss that we are currently forecasting.”

While a global consensus on what constitutes brain health is still missing, the concept is increasingly gaining recognition around the world and among the population, who can do many things to remain healthy.

“There’s still research to be done on what is the most effective way to maintain brain health, but some literature suggests a healthy brain can be achieved through a healthy lifestyle of managing conditions such as high blood pressure and diabetes, limiting alcohol consumption and smoking, prioritising sleep, eating healthy, and staying physically and mentally active,” she concluded.

Members of the press who wish to view the full presentation of the study may request press access to congress - onsite or virtual. A full copy of all abstracts from the congress is publicly available [here](#).

ENDS

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