

# Essay about Significance, Causes and Effects NCDs on Society

## Abstract

A Non-Communicable Disease (NCD) is defined as a medical condition, which is non-infectious and non-transmissible among people. NCDs incorporate both diseases of long and slow progression and that which may lead to a rapid death (such as some types of a sudden stroke). They include certain types of autoimmune diseases, heart diseases and strokes in adults and adolescents, as well as, many cancers, asthma, diabetes and kidney diseases.

NCDs are characterized only by their non-infectious cause, not necessarily by their duration or progression. The concept of NCD and its types are under continuous global studies and research. This article focuses on NCD causes and effects and the significance on NCD in our society.

## ESSAY PLAN

### 1. Introduction to NCDs

#### a. Types of NCDs

#### b. Why does NCD pose a problem for us?

### 2. Causes of NCDs

#### a. Poor Diet and Physical Inactivity

#### b. Tobacco use

#### c. Alcohol

### 3. Effects of NCDs on our society

## 1. Introduction to NCDs

### a. Types of NCDs

Four types of diseases are considered to be common in NCD mortality. These include cardiovascular diseases (heart diseases and stroke), diabetes, cancer and chronic respiratory diseases (chronic pulmonary diseases and asthma). Other key diseases that are associated with NCDs are mental illnesses (uni-polar disorders), alcoholism and alcoholic disorders, schizophrenia and general depression. NCD also encompasses certain infectious diseases. For instance, the human papillomavirus is the cause of several cancers globally. (Harvard School of Public Health, 2011).

### b. Why do NCDs pose a problem for us?

Non-communicable diseases (NCDs) represent a major threat to human health, well-being and development in the modern world. These four NCD factors are currently the world's leading causes of death and kill approximately 40 million people each year. About 60% of all deaths globally and 80% deaths in lower and middle income countries are attributed to NCDs. World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that total deaths from non-communicable diseases are expected to increase by 17% during the next 10 years. NCDs are linked with the combination of several genetic, environmental and lifestyle factors; such as smoking, alcohol and drug abuse, unhealthy and improper diets and a general sedentary lifestyle. (World Medical Association, Inc., 2009). NCDs also threaten progress towards achieving the UN Millennium Development Goals. Poverty is directly connected with NCDs in the developing countries. The rapid increase in NCDs is likely to obstruct poverty alleviation plans and initiatives in low-income countries as it will increase the average healthcare costs of a household. In low-resource countries, health-care costs for NCDs, such as cardiovascular diseases and cancers, can easily reduce household savings, driving families into poverty. (Merten, 2013).

## 2. Causes of NCDs

WHO identifies certain non-modifiable risk factors, such as age, gender, ethnicity and genetic makeup, which are beyond an individual's control and make him/her susceptible to NCDs. It also identifies three major modifiable risk factors that individuals and societies can change to overcome the NCD challenge. These factors include (Harvard School of Public Health, 2011):

### a. Poor Diet and Physical Inactivity

With rapid globalization and urbanization, foods have become rich in refined starch, salt, and unhealthy fats that are available to consumers at cheap prices. As a result, overweight and obesity problems leading to NCDs such as heart attack and strokes are becoming common. Furthermore, due to rapid industrialization, the society has shifted from an agricultural-based economy to a service-based economy. The benefits of manual labor have been replaced with advanced machinery, leading to a sedentary lifestyle with little or no physical activity at all.

### b. Tobacco Use

High use of and dependency on cigarettes and other tobacco-related substances has led to an exponential increase in tobacco-related illnesses and deaths. WHO estimates that tobacco-related deaths and NCDs will reach approximately 6.8 million per annum by the year 2030. Currently, tobacco accounts for approximately 30% of cancers globally and the annual tobacco-related NCDs expenditure surpasses the annual (budgetary) health expenditure in developing economies.

### c. Alcohol

Alcohol has been closely associated with many forms of cancers, chronic kidney diseases and cardiovascular diseases. Alcohol presently accounts for 4.6% of annual deaths and has shown a positive correlation with many cancer sites in human bodies, such as oral cavity, pharynx, esophagus, larynx, liver and female breasts.

## 3. Effects of NCDs on our society

The effects of NCDs on our society are profound. According to a recent report published by the WHO, the socio-economic burden of NCDs is expected to double over the next few years. (World Health Organization, 2011)

Firstly, with respect to cardiovascular diseases, diabetes and cancers, the macroeconomic indicators show a cumulative output loss of USD \$47 trillion over the next twenty years. This loss represents 10% of the total US GDP of 2010.

Secondly, high-income countries are expected to face the largest consequences of NCDs. Middle-income countries (such as India) are expected to face an even larger share as their economies and population will grow.

Cardiovascular and mental health disorders, particularly in the developed world, are the most significant causes aggravating the NCD burden globally.

World Economic Forum's annual Executive Opinion Survey (EOS) demonstrates that NCDs are a major cause of concern for industrialists and economic entities and corporations worldwide. The survey shows that almost half of the industrialists worldwide are concerned that at least one NCD will affect their organizations' growth in the upcoming years, especially in the middle and low income countries where there are inadequate health standards and treatment procedures.

On a global level, NCD-driven concerns are much higher as compared to those for communicable diseases such as HIV, AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis.

NCDs impose excessive treatment-related private and social costs. For example, muscular-skeleton diseases (under the umbrella of NCDs) can severely affect a farmer's ability to employ manual labor. This will substantially reduce his productivity and efficiency and could have severe consequences for an agri-based economy.

In developed economies, NCDs relating to glaucoma, hearing impairments, digestive disorders and arthritis can also have potential consequences for the service sector employees. Vision and hearing impairments can severely affect their performance, leading to massive unemployment and a reduction in the retirement age (as more and more people will be NCD diagnosed at early ages).

Several reform measures have been introduced by the WHO to counter the impact of the rising levels of NCDs across the globe. For example, the WHO anti-tobacco campaign, Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health and the Global Strategy to reduce harmful use of alcohol offer solutions to curb NCD outbreaks. However, these reforms have availed little result as several people remain unaware of the meaning of NCD and its impact on the world of tomorrow.

## **Bibliography**

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