



PREVENTION OPPORTUNITIES UNDER THE BIG SKY

Potentially Preventable Deaths in Montana

During 2008 - 2010, the five leading causes of premature death (occurring among those aged <80 years) among Montanans, all of which are largely preventable, include 1) cancer, 2) heart disease, 3) unintentional injury, 4) chronic lower respiratory diseases (CLRD), and 5) stroke.¹ A recent *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* highlighted the wide variation in the rate of premature death for these causes across the nation.¹ The authors used the average of the three lowest rates among states for each cause as an attainable goal for other states and calculated the number of potentially preventable deaths if each state was able to match the lowest rates in the country.¹ This issue of Montana Public Health highlights potentially preventable deaths in Montana and explores strategies that could help Montana attain lower rates of premature death.

Each year, approximately 1,300 Montanans aged <80 years die from cancer, 830 from heart disease, 420 from unintentional injury, 340 from CLRD, and 260 from stroke (**Figure 1**). About 770 premature deaths could be prevented annually if Montana could attain the same death rates as the best performing states.

While the premature death rate could be improved for all five leading causes, unintentional injury and CLRD are a high priority for Montana with over one-half of the annual deaths being preventable (**Figure 2**). In Montana, about one in five heart disease and stroke deaths among persons aged <80 years could be prevented, and approximately one in ten cancer deaths could be prevented.

Steps for Prevention

Tobacco Use

Many of the premature deaths in Montana could be prevented by reducing exposure to tobacco smoke. An estimated 61% of CLRD deaths, 50% of cancer deaths (including 16 different cancers), 19% of heart disease deaths, and 5% of stroke deaths are attributable to cigarette smoking.² Preventing children and adults from initiating tobacco use, helping current tobacco users quit, and protecting non-tobacco users from second hand smoke are essential for reducing premature deaths in Montana.

Nutrition and Physical Activity

Current dietary guidelines indicate the foundation of a healthy diet is making fruits and vegetables one-half of each meal, choosing low-fat dairy products, making at least one-half of all grains whole grain, and getting protein from a variety of lean sources.³ Adults should get an average of at least 150 minutes of moderate physical activity each week and children should have 60 minutes of activity every day.⁴ Good nutrition and regular physical activity support a healthy weight and lower the risk of heart disease, stroke, and several types of cancer. Communities should make good nutrition and regular physical activity easier by designing the physical environment to be supportive of these activities. Additionally, schools and worksites should implement policies that support and

Figure 1. Annual number of deaths for the five leading causes of death among persons aged <80 years, Montana, 2008-2010

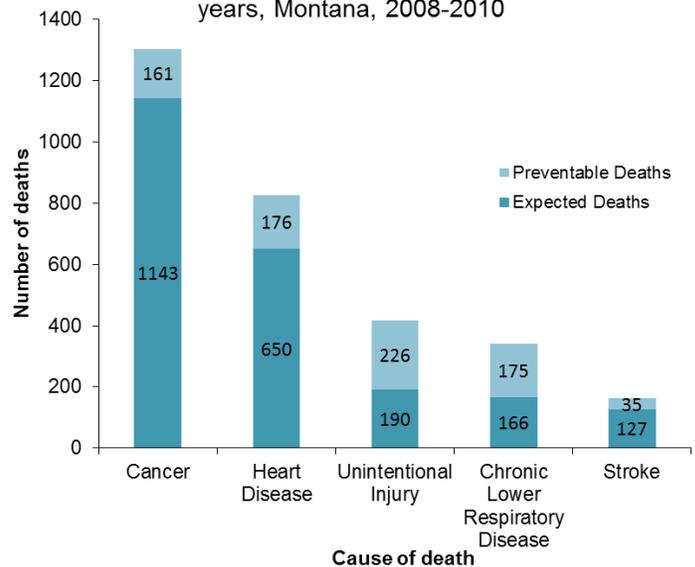
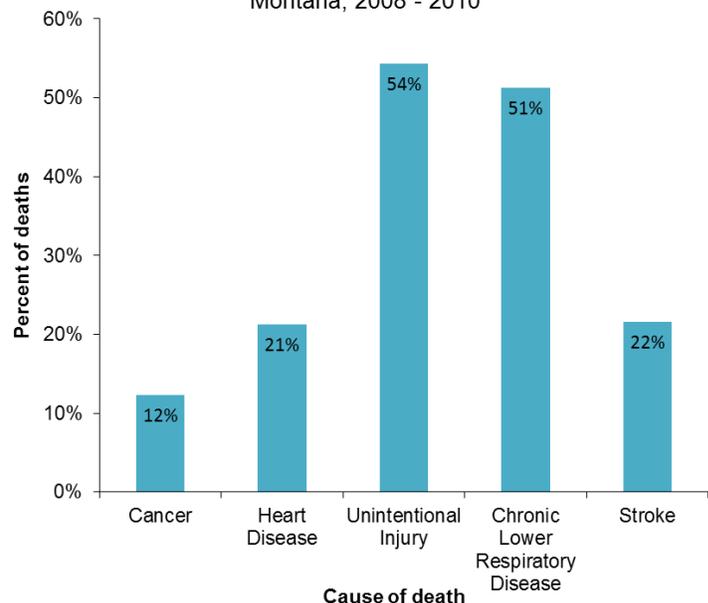


Figure 2. Percent of annual observed deaths among persons aged <80 years that are preventable, Montana, 2008 - 2010



encourage students and employees to choose good nutrition and regular physical activity.

Cancer Screening

Deaths from breast and colorectal cancers can be prevented by early detection through screening. Adults aged 50-75 years should be regularly screened for breast and colorectal cancer.^{5,6} Communities and healthcare providers should educate Montanans on recommendations for cancer screening and ensure all persons know when screening should occur. Employers should encourage screening among their employees by ensuring their insurance providers cover recommended cancer screenings with no out-of-pocket costs

to the member and allowing employees to take the required time off work to complete the screenings.

Unintentional Injury

Motor vehicle crashes, falls, and poisonings are the three leading causes of unintentional injury deaths in Montana.⁷ Using helmets while riding bicycles, motorcycles, and all-terrain vehicles; using seat belts; stopping distracted driving; and properly storing and disposing of prescription medications can all reduce unintentional injury deaths in Montana. Communities should support these safe behaviors with policies and public awareness campaigns.

Recommendations to healthcare providers and public health practitioners:

- Assess all patients for current tobacco use and refer patients ready to quit to the MT Tobacco QuitLine, 1-800-QUIT-NOW
- Refer patients at high-risk for developing type 2 diabetes to the Montana Diabetes Prevention Program (DPP) — find more information about the Montana DPP by visiting <http://dphhs.mt.gov/publichealth/Diabetes/DPP>
- Refer adults aged 50–75 years for evidence-based breast and colorectal cancer screening consistent with recommendations from the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force, <http://www.uspreventiveservicestaskforce.org/BrowseRec/Index>
- Counsel all patients to be properly restrained in motor vehicles
- Ensure patients have access to the 24/7 Rocky Mountain Poison and Drug Center's phone number, 1-800-222-1222

For more information, contact ChronicDiseasePrevention@mt.gov or 1-844-MTHLT4U (1-844-684-5848)

References

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- 4) Physical Activity Guidelines Advisory Committee Report, 2008. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. 2008; Washington, D.C.
- 5) U.S. Preventive Services Task Force. Breast Cancer Screening Recommendation Summary. September 2014. <http://www.uspreventiveservicestaskforce.org/Page/Topic/recommendation-summary/breast-cancer-screening>
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- 7) Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. National Center for Injury Prevention and Control. WISQARS Leading Causes of Death. Accessed on December 19, 2014 at http://www.cdc.gov/injury/wisqars/leading_causes_death.html