

Announcement

Creating Opportunities to Influence The Australian Chronic Disease Prevention Alliance

Public health research in Australia is among the world's best, leading in areas such as tobacco control, immunisation and HIV/AIDS. However public health research, specifically in the areas of nutrition and physical activity, is currently missing opportunities to influence one of the most important aspects of the debate about the prevention of chronic disease—the economic implications for government and the community.

Limited resources mean all governments and health organisations at a national, state/territory and local level actively look for ways to prioritise their spending. Explaining the economic story behind the health outcomes data is an important activity which health economists and public health professionals must actively pursue together.

A new Australian Chronic Disease Prevention Alliance (ACDPA) publication, *Chronic Illness: Australia's Health Challenge: The Economic Case for Physical Activity and Nutrition in the Prevention of Chronic Disease*, aims to tell just this story. The ACDPA's member organisations address the major causes of chronic illness in Australia. All these illnesses share physical inactivity and poor nutrition as important risk factors.

The ACDPA member organisations are:

- Diabetes Australia,
- Kidney Health Australia,
- National Heart Foundation of Australia,
- National Stroke Foundation,
- The Cancer Council Australia.

While the ACDPA has been able to describe some elements of the economic case for prevention, there are still gaps in the economic evidence. Building the argument for greater sustained investment in prevention needs more

evidence of the efficacy of interventions in comparable outcomes measures such as Quality Adjusted Life Years (QALYs) or Disability Adjusted Life Years (DALYs). The economic case for prevention can only be strengthened if relevant efficacy and cost data are collected alongside the health outcomes data in current and future interventions and research.

To put the economics of the prevention of chronic disease on the agenda and influence this important debate, the ACDPA encourages all those in the public health field to:

- develop links between public health professionals, researchers, research funders and health economists to enable better consideration of the efficacy of interventions and the economic implications of prevention;
- understand the efficacy and economic data relevant to the analysis of the planned research or intervention;
- build (and fund) sufficient resources, time and capacity into research and intervention proposals to produce research outcomes that reflect both the health outcomes and health economics evidence.

It is only through concerted action starting now that the efficacy and economic evidence will be readily available to support the call for sustained investment in prevention over the long term.

Chronic Illness: Australia's Health Challenge: The Economic Case for Physical Activity and Nutrition in the Prevention of Chronic Disease—Full Report and the Supporting Literature /Research Review were produced with financial support from the Australian Government, Department of Health and Ageing.

Copies of these ACDPA documents are available on the ACDPA member websites or from the ACDPA Executive Officer, Helen Egan (ACDPA@heartfoundation.com.au).

