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Virgin Islands: Heart Disease

Dylan Hayden

Augustana College, Rock Island Illinois

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Health in Virgin Islands (U.S)

Heart Disease & Stroke



General and Political Information

Location:

The Virgin Islands are located in the Caribbean; the arc of Caribbean islands begins off the coast of Florida and extends all the way to South America. This region includes hundreds of islands and cays. They are grouped by location into the Greater Antilles which includes the larger islands in the northwestern area (Cuba, Jamaica, Cayman Islands, Haiti/Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico). The Virgin Islands are 40-50 miles east of Puerto Rico; and about 1106 miles southeast Miami, Florida. (Where is the U.S Virgin Islands: Geography, 2018)

Economy Structure:

- The organization of the Government of the Virgin Islands rests upon the Revised Organic Act of 1954 in which the United States Congress declared the U.S. Virgin Islands to be an unincorporated territory of the United States.
- The Government of the United States Virgin Islands consists of three co-equal branches of Government, the Executive, Legislative, and Judicial branches.
- Tourism, trade, and other services are the primary economic activities, accounting for nearly 60% of the Virgin Islands GDP and about half of total civilian employment. (United States Virgin Islands Economic Development Authority, 2018)

Major Challenges:

- Several hurricanes in recent years.
- Frequent and severe droughts and floods.
- Occasional earthquakes.
- Lack of natural freshwater resources.
- Heart disease & stroke.
- Cancer.
- Diabetes.
- HIV infection.



Virgin Islands U.S Demographic Info.

2018 Population: 104,908

Religion: Baptist, Roman Catholic, and Episcopalian.

Race and Ethnicity %:

-Black Or African American: 76%

- Asian alone: 1.4%

-White: 15.7%

- Some other race alone: 4.5%

-American Indian and Alaskan Native: .4%

- Two or more Races: 2%

- (Virgin Islands Demographics, 2018)

Heart Disease in Virgin Islands (U.S)

As with the mainland U.S., cardiovascular diseases are the leading causes of death in the USVI. According to the V.I. Bureau of Vital Statistics, cardiovascular diseases accounts for approximately 34 percent of all deaths in the Virgin Islands, a rate of 191.5 deaths per 100,000 population. (USVI Department of Health, 2003)

Risk factors for cardiovascular diseases are widespread in the USVI. Although most of the major risk factors for heart disease and stroke are modifiable or entirely preventable. Over 80 percent of Virgin Islanders report having at least one major risk factor for heart disease. (USVI Department of Health, 2003) These include tobacco use, physical inactivity, poor diet, and high blood pressure, high blood cholesterol, obesity, and diabetes.

safebeat.org/cardiac/heart_health



Identification, Intervention, Challenges

Some symptoms someone may have of heart disease could be: shortness of breath, irregular heart beats, a faster heartbeat, weakness or dizziness, nausea, or sweating.

Intervention is most effectively accomplished with an integrated family-oriented approach. Involving the entire family in counseling about interventions to reduce the risk factors for coronary artery disease is important. If it was up to me I would have the family complete a questionnaire about the family's history and risk of cardiovascular disease.

Pediatric patients with congenital heart disease can have complex medical issues and may eventually need heart transplantation. A true multidisciplinary approach and expertise in the transition to adult care are required when treating these challenging cases. (Meeting the challenges of congenital heart disease, 2018)

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