

Brazil's Most Thorough Heart Study Ever Warns: Country Needs Prevention

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The biggest ever study of heart problems in Brazil, which has been two years in the making, has now been completed. The Hearts of Brazil (Corações do Brasil) study Atlas was produced by the Brazilian Cardiology Society (SBC).

It shows why Brazil is one of countries with the highest number of deaths from heart problems - almost 300,000 annually. The study breaks down heart problems by race and geographical location.

Wednesday, September 14, the Brazilian Minister of Health, Saraiva Felipe, received the document. The study presents a profile of the incidence of the main risk factors contributing to heart disease - cholesterol, hypertension, diabetes, sedentary habits, smoking, heredity, alcoholism, illicit drug use, stress, obesity, and peripheral vascular disease.

The data show that 83% of Brazilians are sedentary (in the Northeast the index climbs to 93%). 13% consume alcoholic beverages on a daily basis (the highest percentage is in the Southeast region), 25% smoke, and 14% have higher than normal blood fat levels.

For the executive director of the SBC, Raimundo Marques, the Ministry should focus more on preventive approaches.

"Health policy in Brazil is geared to urgency. It is not aimed at chronic disease or disease prevention and health promotion; it is aimed at treating heart attack victims, treating stroke victims, not at disease prevention in individuals who suffer from hypertension or diabetes. Health policy, therefore, needs to be changed," he affirms.

The most extensive epidemiological study ever carried out in Brazil on cardiac risk factors also indicates that 5.3% of the population aged 45 or more, that is, approximately 10 to 11 million individuals, have a high probability of developing Peripheral Arterial Obstructive Disease (PAOD), a type of obstruction of the arteries.

This disease, according to the study, is more common in men than women, is twice as frequent among blacks, and is eight times more frequent among populations with little schooling.

According to the SBC, PAOD patients run a high risk of suffering from myocardial infarction, cerebral stroke, or death from cardiovascular disease, the chief cause of death in Brazil (300 thousand deaths per year).

The study, which took two years to complete, was conducted under the orientation of the Vox Populi Institute. 1,239 people were interviewed in 77 Brazilian cities. The study will be presented at the 60th Brazilian Congress of Cardiology, September 17-21, in Porto Alegre, capital of the southernmost Brazilian state.

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