

Cardiac patients underserved globally due to lack of rehab programs

15 July 2014

Rehabilitation programs must become an integral part of cardiac care to significantly reduce the burden of living with heart disease, one of the most common chronic diseases and causes of death globally, according to York University Professor Sherry Grace.

"Cardiac rehabilitation is a cost-effective program offering [heart patients](#) exercise, education and risk reduction," says Grace, noting that participation results in 25 per cent less death, lower re-hospitalization rates and better quality of life.

Despite these benefits, [cardiac rehabilitation](#) is vastly underused, particularly compared with costly revascularization and medical therapy, according to the review Grace conducted with Karam Turk-Adawi in the Cardiovascular Rehabilitation & Prevention Unit, University Health Network (UHN), and Dr. Nizal Sarrafzadegan, director of Isfahan Cardiovascular Research Center at Isfahan University of Medical Sciences in Iran.

"Cardiac rehabilitation services are insufficiently implemented, with only 39 per cent of [countries](#) providing any," says Grace.

Heart disease has become an epidemic in low-income and middle-income countries (LMICs), and [cardiac rehab](#) can reduce the socio-economic impact of the disease by promoting return to work and reducing premature mortality, notes to Grace, who is also the director of research at the GoodLife Fitness Cardiovascular Rehabilitation Unit at the UHN.

"If supportive health policies, funding, physician referral strategies and alternative delivery modes are implemented, we could reduce the ratio from one cardiac rehab program per 6.4 million inhabitants in a middle income country like Paraguay, to the one program per 102,000 available in the US, a high income country," adds Grace.

Low-income countries such as Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Kenya have one rehab program each for their entire population.

The article, [Global availability of cardiac rehabilitation, published online at *Nature Reviews Cardiology*, indicates that while 68 per cent of high-income countries have cardiac rehabilitation, only 23 per cent of LMICs do, despite the fact that 80 per cent of deaths from heart disease occur in these countries.](#)

[_ Provided by York University](#)

APA citation: Cardiac patients underserved globally due to lack of rehab programs (2014, July 15) retrieved 20 July 2022 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2014-07-cardiac-patients-underserved-globally-due.html>

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