NCHS Dataline

The National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has issued the latest report on the nation's health. This year's edition has a special feature on medical technology. The first public-use data files from the National Survey of Family Growth (NSFG) are now available from NCHS. A 2007 analysis of mortality shows record high life expectancy rates and record low death rates. NCHS has also published the first report on consumer use of health information technology and published trends in home births.

HEALTH, UNITED STATES, 2009

The annual report on the health of the nation, "Health, United States, 2009," provides current and trend data on a wide variety of health and health-care measures, includes a chartbook on key indicators, and presents a special feature on medical technology. The medical technology feature documents the rapidly growing application of medical technology for diagnosis and treatment.

According to the report, the rate of magnetic resonance imaging and computed and positron emission tomography scans, ordered or provided, tripled between 1996 and 2007. The rate of adults aged 45 years and older who were discharged from the hospital after receiving at least one knee replacement procedure increased 70% from 1996 to 2006 (26.5 per 10,000 population in 1996 to 45.2 per 10,000 population in 2006). From 1988–1994 to 2003–2006, the use of antidiabetic drugs among adults aged 45 years and older increased about 50%, and the use of statin drugs to lower cholesterol among this age group increased almost tenfold. The number of new organ transplantations per one million people increased 31% for kidney transplants (43.7 per one million in 1997 vs. 57.2 per one million in 2006) and 42% for liver transplants between 1997 and 2006 (15.6 per one million in 1997) vs. 22.2 per one million in 2006).

The report profiles the nation's health using a number of measures reported on each year. These include determinants of health, health status, health resources, health-care utilization, access, and costs. Some of the highlights from this year's report show that:

 Life expectancy at birth increased more for the black than for the white population between 1990 and 2007, thereby narrowing the gap in life expectancy between these two groups. The gap between the white and black populations declined 35% from 1989 to 2007. Despite this progress, the race differential stood at 4.6 years in 2007. Overall U.S. life expectancy in 2007 was 77.9 years. White females continue to have the longest life expectancy (80.7 years) followed by black females (77.0 years), white males (75.8 years), and black males (70.2 years).

- In 2007, 20% of U.S. adults were current cigarette smokers, a slight decrease from 21% in the previous three years. Men were more likely to be current cigarette smokers than women (22% vs. 17%).
- During 2005–2006, 30% of adults often or almost always had trouble sleeping in the past month.
- In 2007, 20% of adults aged 18 years and older had at least one emergency department visit in the past year, and 7% had two or more visits.
- The percentage of the population taking at least one prescription drug during the previous month increased from 38% in 1988–1994 to 47% in 2003–2006, and the percentage taking three or more prescription drugs increased from 11% to 21%.

NATIONAL SURVEY OF FAMILY GROWTH DATA FILE

The first public-use data file from the continuous National Survey of Family Growth (NSFG), the NCHS survey that collects information on family formation, growth and dissolution, and reproductive health, is now available. It covers interviews conducted from July 2006 through December 2008. The NSFG has been conducted in periodic cycles by NCHS from the 1970s until 2006, when it went to continuous operations.

The NSFG data file includes more than 13,000 interviews with a national sample of women and men aged 15–44 years on a wide range of topics including fertility, infertility, reproductive health, sexual activity, contraceptive use, marriage and cohabitation, adoption, breastfeeding, intended and unintended births, and related topics. More information about the survey, the data file, and all related documentation can be found at http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nsfg/htm. The website also includes all of the publications and files

from previous surveys, as well as key statistics from the NSFG, in an alphabetical list of basic findings on key topics from the 2002 NSFG.

DEATH IN THE UNITED STATES

Patterns of death in the United States are examined in a new NCHS Data Brief. "Death in the United States, 2007" includes a variety of statistics, including age-adjusted death rates, life expectancy data, state maps, and tables and charts that show trends and patterns by cause of death, age, race, and gender. The age-adjusted death rate—a measure that accounts for changes in the age distribution of the population—has declined steadily since 1960. In 2007, the death rate reached a record low of 760.3 per 100,000 standard population, which is 43% lower than the 1960 rate of 1,339.2 per 100,000 standard population.

Much of the recent improvements in death rates and life expectancy can be attributed to ongoing reductions in death rates from the major causes of death. In 2007, the five leading causes of death were heart disease, cancer, stroke, chronic lower respiratory diseases, and accidents. These accounted for more than 64% of all deaths in the U.S. This decline has occurred in all racial groups and, while the gap has narrowed, significant differences remain.

The report documents notable differences in mortality among the U.S. states. Hawaii has the lowest age-adjusted death rate of all the states at 20% lower than the mean overall rate for the U.S. (760.3 deaths per 100,000 population). West Virginia had the highest state age-adjusted death rate in 2007, at 25% higher than the mean U.S. rate. In general, states in the southeast region have higher rates than those in other regions of the country. Data in this report were based on death certificates received in state vital statistics offices and reported to NCHS through the National Vital Registration System.

NCHS SURVEYS CONSUMERS' USE OF HEALTH INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

The National Health Interview Survey (NHIS), conducted by NCHS, is the first nationally representative household survey to collect data on the use of health information technology (HIT). In 2009, the NHIS included five questions on HIT, including whether respondents had used the Internet to look up health information, communicated with a health provider by e-mail, requested a prescription refill on the Internet, used online chat rooms to learn about health topics, and used the Internet to make a health-care appoint-

ment. A new report, "Health Information Technology Use by Men and Women Aged 18–64: Early Release of Estimates from the National Health Interview Survey, January–June 2009," presents preliminary data on the use of HIT.

From January through June 2009, 51% of adults aged 18-64 years had used the Internet to look up health information during the past 12 months. Women were more likely than men to look up health information on the Internet (58% vs. 43%) and younger adults were more likely to do so than older adults. More than 3% of adults aged 18-64 years had used an online chat group to learn about health topics in the past 12 months; women were more likely to do so than men. During the first half of 2009, almost 5% of adults aged 18-64 years had communicated with a health-care provider by e-mail in the past 12 months, about the same percentage had requested a prescription refill on the Internet, and almost 3% had made an appointment with a health-care profesional using the Internet. In general, younger adults (those aged 44 years and younger) were more likely to use HIT than those aged 45–64 years, and women were more likely to do so than men.

The NHIS is a large-scale household interview survey that collects a wide range of data on disease prevalence, health-care use, and health behaviors. The survey is conducted on a continous basis and reaches a national sample of the civilian, noninstitutionalized population on an annual basis. The report is available on the NCHS website at http://www.cdc.gov/nchs.

HOME BIRTH TRENDS

A new NCHS report, "Trends and Characteristics of Home and Other Out-of-Hospital Births in the United States, 1990–2006," tracks trends in home births and other births out of the hospital and finds that home births increased by 5% in 2005 and remained steady in 2006. There were 38,558 out-of-hospital births in 2006, or approximately 1% of the more than 4.2 million births that year. In 1940, 44% of births occurred out of the hospital and this percentage has declined steadily to reach the 1% level experienced during the past several decades. Nearly two-thirds of the out-of-hospital births in 2006 occurred at home. Midwives delivered 61% of home births in 2006—a significant increase over the 43% of home births delivered by midwives in 1990.

The report documents significant differences by race/ethnicity and other maternal characteristics and shows that home births are more likely among non-Hispanic white women, married women, women

aged 25 years and older, and women with several previous children. Home births were less likely than hospital births to be preterm, low birthweight, and to involve multiple births. The report identified differences by state. In addition, the percentage of home births was higher in counties of fewer than 100,000 residents. The report is available on the NCHS website at http:// www.cdc.gov/nchs.

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