



Press release

Statistics Netherlands

PR99-108
29 April 1999
9.30 hrs

Flu epidemics push up deaths in 1998

In 1998 138 thousand people died in the Netherlands, just over two thousand more than in the previous year. The increase in the number of deaths is related to flu epidemics in March and December, which also led to higher mortality from respiratory diseases and heart disease.

Provisional figures from Statistics Netherlands further show that two-thirds of all deaths in the Netherlands were caused by cardiovascular disease and cancer. Respiratory diseases are the third cause of death. The number of people dying from AIDS continued to decrease.

Flu epidemics cause more deaths

Flu epidemics in March and December of last year were the cause of the increase in the number of deaths. The number of deaths with "influenza" as primary cause was significantly higher than normal. It is also known that influenza infections can have very serious consequences for older people, especially those over 75. It is in this age group that more people died. The winter of 1998 was a mild one: Statistics Netherlands figures show that considerably fewer people died in January and February than in the same months in previous years.

Heart vascular disease main cause of death

Cardiovascular disease is still the most important cause of death, accounting for 50 thousand deaths in 1998. The number is comparable with that for 1997, ending the fall in mortality from cardiovascular illnesses in recent years. This is because of the flu-related deaths from these diseases.

Deaths from cancer stable

The second cause of death, cancer, claimed just over 37 thousand lives last year, one quarter of all deaths. Cancer mortality was at the same level as in 1997.

Respiratory diseases claim more lives

In 1998 14 thousand people died from diseases of the respiratory organs, most from pneumonia (42%) and chronic non-specific respiratory diseases (50%). Compared with 1997 deaths from respiratory diseases have increased by 6.5%; here too the flu epidemics have taken their toll.

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Heart attacks kill mainly men

Acute myocardial infarction is the number one cause of death for men, followed by lung cancer and cerebral infarction. Of all forms of cancer, lung cancer kills most people: just over 6,600 deaths in 1998, and 32% of all cancer deaths among men. In 1998 fewer men died of lung cancer than in 1997, continuing the decrease in the last ten years.

Cerebral infarction main cause of female deaths

For women cerebral infarction claimed most victims; acute myocardial infarction was the second cause of death, with breast cancer in third place. Mortality from breast cancer was at the same level as in 1997.

The number of women dying from lung cancer has increased noticeably since 1970. With two thousand deaths, lung cancer is the second form of cancer causing female deaths, after breast cancer. The risk of dying from lung cancer is still much smaller than the risk of dying from breast cancer, however. Breast cancer claimed 3,500 women last year.

Number of AIDS victims continues to fall

The provisional figures from Statistics Netherlands show that fewer people died of AIDS last year: 135 deaths, 25% down on 1997 (184), and well down on 1996 (327) and 1995 (439). The largest number of deaths in one year was in 1994 with 444 victims. The number of AIDS cases has been officially registered since 1982; since then nearly 3,500 people have died of the disease in the Netherlands.

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