Heart Failure Backgrounder

Quick facts:
- An estimated 5.1 million people suffer from HF in the United States; this is expected to rise further as the population ages\(^1\).
- Heart failure is associated with a lower survival rate following hospital discharge than some cancers (eg, breast cancer in women and bowel cancer in men)\(^2\).
- HF is the most common cause of hospitalization in patients over 65\(^3,4\); more than 1 million hospitalizations have a primary diagnosis of heart failure in the United States\(^1\).
- HF presents a major and growing health-economic burden that currently exceeds $30 billion in the United States, accounting for direct and indirect costs\(^1\).

Heart failure is a debilitating and potentially life-threatening condition where the heart cannot pump enough blood around the body.\(^5\)

Causes of heart failure: Heart failure often occurs when the heart has lost function. This can happen following a heart attack or other illnesses affecting the heart, or by damage sustained more gradually due to diabetes, high blood pressure, coronary artery disease or excess alcohol consumption.\(^5,6\).

Symptoms: For those living with heart failure, symptoms can be very debilitating\(^5,6\):
- Difficulty breathing (dyspnea)
- Swollen limbs due to build-up of fluid
- Severe fatigue
- Coughing / wheezing
- Nausea
- Lack of appetite

Heart failure may progress and slowly worsen over time. This progressive and persistent condition is known as chronic heart failure (CHF) but can also be punctuated by acute episodes (acute heart failure, AHF) where symptoms worsen rapidly resulting in the need for hospitalization. AHF can also develop in people without a history of CHF.\(^6\)

Risk of developing HF: The risk of developing heart failure increases with age and in general tends to be more common in men than women. About 1 in 5 individuals (20%) will develop heart failure at some point in their lives.\(^1,7\)

Burden of HF: Heart failure presents a major and growing health-economic burden that currently exceeds $30 billion in the United States, which accounts for both direct and indirect costs.\(^1\). Studies show that aspects of quality of life are worse for heart failure patients than for those with certain other chronic conditions.\(^8\)

Treatment of HF: HF is a complex and challenging condition to manage. It is currently incurable. In the United States, deaths from heart failure have more than doubled over the last 35 years.\(^9\)
References