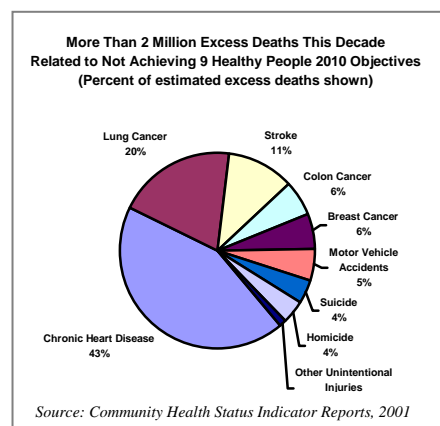


A STRONG PUBLIC HEALTH INFRASTRUCTURE CAN HELP SAVE LIVES

Recent events have highlighted a potential weakness in our health care system; namely that “public health is a national security issue.”¹ Now is the time to strengthen our public health infrastructure to ensure that it can meet its ongoing responsibilities, and thereby be prepared for new and emerging threats. If we invest in the fundamentals of a strong public health infrastructure, we can protect ourselves and also realize many collateral benefits. There are many good reasons to invest in public health. Projections made in June 2001 by the Public Health Foundation indicate more than two million excess deaths may occur this decade – not from an unknown threat – but as a result of not meeting only nine of the Healthy People 2010 mortality objectives for communities. These nine causes of death are highly responsive to public health interventions.

The health of Americans has improved dramatically over the last century, primarily due to public health interventions, not traditional disease interventions. Below are just a few examples of our successes:

- In the last 100 years, public health efforts helped increase life expectancy by 30 years and decrease infant mortality rates by 95%.
- In the year 2000, more than 2 million Americans were alive that otherwise would have died from heart disease and stroke.



Unfortunately, the infrastructure that helped achieve these gains is over-extended and not as strong as is needed. At a time when we face a world of new threats and familiar problems, our public health infrastructure “is structurally weak in nearly every area.”² After decades of stagnant funding and increasing needs, we are ill prepared to protect against current and emerging diseases and biohazards. This deterioration has been costly, as witnessed with the re-emergence of TB in the 1990s, costing many lives and over \$1 billion in New York City alone.³

If we strengthen our public health system we can protect our population from emerging health threats and save lives through prevention as well. We need to expand and enhance our workforce, communications and tracking systems, research and evaluation capabilities, and our laboratory facilities. It is also crucial to build capacity of federal, state and local health agencies who are first responders to community health threats. State and local health workforce, and laboratory and communications capacity have been overburdened in responding to the anthrax attacks, smallpox vaccination campaigns, SARS, and many other threats to the public’s health. Based on the best available data, the Public Health Foundation estimates an immediate need for over \$10 billion in new investments -- a dime a day for every American -- to produce the public health system our Nation needs and deserves.

**For the health of the public and the well-being of our Nation, do what is right ---
INVEST IN OUR NATION’S PUBLIC HEALTH SYSTEM TODAY**

¹ Tommy Thompson, October 2001

² Public Health’s Infrastructure: A Status Report, CDC, 2000, p iii

³ Public Health’s Infrastructure: A Status Report, CDC, 2000, p 13