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Old age mortality in Eastern and South-Eastern Asia

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Date received: 11 Jul 2012
Date published: 15 Nov 2013
Word count: 8637
Keywords: Asia, cause of death, decomposition, East Asia, life expectancy, old age mortality, Southeast Asia
DOI: 10.4054/DemRes.2013.29.38

Abstract

Background: Eastern and South-Eastern Asian countries have witnessed a marked decline in old age mortality in recent decades. Yet no studies have investigated the trends and patterns in old age mortality and cause-of-death in the region.

Objective: We reviewed the trends and patterns of old age mortality and cause-of-death for countries in the region.

Methods: We examined data on old age mortality in terms of life expectancy at age 65 and age-specific death rates from the 2012 Revision of the World Population Prospects for 14 countries in the region (China, Hong Kong, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Indonesia, Japan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar, Malaysia, Mongolia, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Singapore, Thailand, and Viet Nam) and data on cause-of-death from the WHO for five countries (China, Hong Kong, Japan, Republic of Korea, and Singapore) from 1980 to 2010.

Results: While mortality transitions in these populations took place in different times, and at different levels of socioeconomic development and living environment, changes in their age patterns and sex differentials in mortality showed certain similarities: women witnessed a similar decline to men in spite of their lower mortality, and young elders had a larger decline than the oldest-old. In all five countries examined for cause-of-death, most of the increases in life expectancy at age 65 in both men and women were attributable to declines in mortality from stroke and heart disease. GDP per capita, educational level, and urbanization explained much of the variations in life expectancy and cause-specific mortality, indicating critical contributions of these basic socioeconomic development indicators to the mortality decline over time in the region.

Conclusions: These findings shed light on the relationship between epidemiological transition, changing age patterns of mortality, and improving life expectancy in these populations.

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