

FIRSTHEALTH COMMUNITY VOICES FACT SHEET



Men's Health: The Silent Crisis



BACKGROUND

FirstHealth of the Carolinas (FirstHealth) is a not-for-profit health system serving a largely rural 15-county area in the mid-Carolinas. FirstHealth is concerned by the growing evidence that the health status of men in the United States is sharply deteriorating, as compared to women. In 1920, the life expectancy gap between men and women was one year. By 2001, men were dying 5.4 years sooner than women. That trend is particularly pronounced for men in minority groups. Somehow, the advances in medicine and health care are passing men by.

LOCAL FACTS

- ♦ The results of a health survey conducted in the FirstHealth service area reveal the following disparities in health status and behaviors of local men:
- ♦ Men are almost twice as likely as women to be the victim of a violent crime.
- ♦ 9.8 percent of men reported themselves as chronic drinkers (defined as two or more drinks a day for the past month), as compared to less than 2 percent of women.
- ♦ 18.8 percent report binge drinking (5 or more drinks per day on one or more occasions in a month), compared to 4.5 percent of women.
- ♦ Men smoke at higher rates than women.

NATIONAL FACTS

- ♦ Men have a higher death rate for every one of the top 10 leading causes of death.
- ♦ Almost twice as many men as women die of heart disease.
- ♦ Fifty percent more men die of cancer.
- ♦ The chances of being a homicide victim are 1 in 30 for black males, as compared to 1 in 495 for white females.
- ♦ Men are more likely to be uninsured than women.
- ♦ Men make half the preventive care physician visits made by women.
- ♦ Men tend to have less healthy lifestyles and engage in more risk-taking behaviors.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- ♦ Local, state and federal health agencies should make addressing the disparities in the status of men's health a public health priority, and design effective educational and outreach initiatives for addressing the issue.
- ♦ North Carolina can take a leadership position by establishing a Division of Men's Health within the Department of Health and Human Services.
- ♦ Establishing a national Office of Men's Health would stimulate research and funding to find effective ways of improving the health status of men.
- ♦ Inconvenient hours and long waits for appointments are barriers to men seeking care. Health care providers can make access to care easier by offering evening and weekend hours for preventive and routine care, along with community-based outreach and education efforts targeted to men at the worksites.