

National/Regional

Heart care costs rise

SARASOTA, Fla. (AP) — Treatment of heart and circulatory disease, by far the country's main cause of death, will cost an estimated \$78.6 billion this year, the American Heart Association said Sunday.

"That's a real figure, and it's going up," said Dr. Thomas Ryan, president of the association.

The estimate equals about \$325 for every man, woman and child in the United States.

The costs include \$48.2 billion for hospital and nursing home services, \$13.6 billion for lost work time due to disability, \$11.8 billion for doctor bills and \$5 billion for medicines.

Last year, the association estimated these diseases, which include heart attacks, high blood pressure and strokes, cost \$72.1 billion.

Ryan said some of the costs might be reduced if physicians would be more discriminating in the ways they use medical technology.

For example, even though a patient technically may be a candidate for blood vessel surgery, he said, physicians should learn to ask whether it's wise to put him through the procedure.

Sometimes, the same results can be achieved through drug therapy, researchers have found.

The cost figures were in the annual brochure, "Heart Facts," released at a science writers forum sponsored by the association.

Cardiovascular diseases kill twice as many people each year as cancer and 10 times as many as accidents.

In 1983, the last year for which accurate figures are available, 989,400 Americans died from heart and circulatory diseases.

Student goals change

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Fewer college freshmen plan careers in computers or engineering than a year ago, and the number who consider it very important to make a lot of money decreased for the first time in 15 years, a new study says.

And while business remained the most popular major, students are slowly returning to careers in education as a nationwide baby boomlet creates a teacher shortage — a turnabout from a decade earlier, when there were more teachers than jobs and few people were entering the field, the study found.

The study also said that while the majority of freshmen still consider themselves middle-of-the-road politically, they have traditionally liberal views on such issues as disarmament, military spending, taxes, pollution and abortion.

The 164-page report being released Monday was compiled by the Cooperative Institutional Research Program. It was sponsored by the American Council on Education and the University of California at Los Angeles graduate school of education.

The study was based on surveys of 192,453 students, or a little more than 1 percent of the fall 1985 freshman class of 1.66 million at 365 colleges and universities.

One of the most surprising discoveries was the drop in interest in computer and engineering fields.

"This declining interest in technological careers stands in stark contrast to the growing national concern for increased technological training and technological capacity in the American workforce," the report said.

Only 4.4 percent of the freshmen indicated they intend to pursue careers as computer programmers or analysts, down from 6.1 percent in 1984 and a high of 8.8 percent in 1982.

In engineering, the drop was less severe, declining to 10 percent in 1985 from 10.4 percent the previous year and a peak of 12 percent in 1982.

Freshmen interest in the biological and physical sciences also waned slightly, while the humanities gained. Business remained the most popular major with 24.3 percent, up from 24 percent a year earlier and 21.3 percent in 1980.

The survey found 6.2 percent planned on teaching careers, compared to 5.5 percent in 1984 and an all-time low of 4.7 percent in 1982. The highest level was 23.5 percent in 1968.

The number of students indicating it was essential or very important to be financially well off declined slightly to 70.9 percent, reversing 15 years of increases.

In 1984, the percentage was 71.2 percent. But the new rate still remained far above the record 1970 low of about 39 percent.

The study also showed that 28.6 percent favor more defense spending, compared to 32.5 percent in 1984 and 38.8 percent in 1982. Two-thirds of the freshmen believe the government should do more to promote disarmament.

Drug-related deaths double

PORTLAND (AP) — Deaths from drug overdoses in Oregon more than doubled in 1985, the Multnomah County medical examiner says.

There were 57 drug-overdose deaths last year, up from 23 in 1984, according to statistics compiled from throughout the state by Dr. Larry Lewman's office.

Of the 57 deaths, 47 were from heroin overdoses and the rest involved overdoses where cocaine and heroin were mixed in significant amounts.

"When they're buying stuff, they don't know what they're buying," Lewman said. "It doesn't have that FDA (U.S. Food and Drug Administration) seal."

Most of the deaths involved men in their late 20s or early 30s who had long-term drug habits involving heroin, and most involved people living in the Portland area.

The increasing number of drug deaths in Oregon was first noticed early last year and the rate accelerated in the last part

of the year and into 1986, Lewman said.

"I don't know what you can do," Lewman said. "People don't know what's out there. It's stupid, it's Russian roulette with a needle. You can't pass laws to keep people from doing stupid things."

Officials say the growing popularity of so-called "black tar heroin" is at least partly responsible for the rise in drug deaths. The brand is grown and manufactured in Mexico.



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