

A Dollar a Day May Keep the Doctor Away: Putting Spending on Food and Healthcare on a Scale

Description

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ABSTRACT: In Canada, the economic burden from chronic diseases on healthcare systems is escalating and has the potential to significantly disrupt healthcare delivery in the years ahead. Unhealthy diet is a key preventable risk factor for chronic, non-communicable diseases, and, of all modifiable risk factors, has the largest impact on the global burden of chronic disease. Adherence to dietary recommendations is poor among Canadians, and the costs of healthful foods are often cited as an impediment to healthful dietary choices. But what does it cost us in terms of increased healthcare burden if we do not eat healthy? Canadians currently spend \$9.34 per person per day on food, of which one dollar (10.7%) should be set aside for future use by the government for the treatment and management of chronic diseases because Canadians do not follow established dietary recommendations for healthy eating. In this commentary, we contend that relatively modest investments in dietary interventions to improve the affordability of healthful foods, to reduce the affordability of harmful foods, and to limit access and discourage consumption of inessential foods may have a significant impact on the chronic disease burden and help dramatically reduce the healthcare costs in Canada.

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DISCLAIMER: Research conclusions and policy recommendations are those of the authors and should not be interpreted as a reflection of the opinions or policy positions of their employers and affiliated organizations.

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