

Bulgarian Population in Transitional Period

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In the transition period from a communist to market-oriented economy, Bulgaria faces several public health challenges. One of them is the decline in population (estimated fall from current 8.25 million to around 6 million in 2045), mainly due to emigration and pronounced fall in fertility. Infant mortality is still relatively high (over 15/1,000 live births), and the incidence of tuberculosis is on the rise. Total mortality shows a steady upward trend from 12.1/1,000 in 1990 to 14.3/1,000 in 1998. Trends in ischemic heart disease are comparable to those in other Central and Eastern European countries, but stroke mortality is notably higher. This calls for detailed epidemiological studies of risk factors, such as salt consumption, as well as preventive programs for detection and control of high blood pressure. The problems of smoking and alcohol abuse should be addressed by a coordinated public health and legal measures.

Key words: Bulgaria; cardiovascular diseases; health status indicators; public health, smoking