

Leyla Weighs In: Shedding light on health statistics vs. outcomes



On an almost daily basis, we are bombarded with frightening health reports. Claims such as “50,000 people will die of colon cancer this year,” or “prostate cancer is the second leading cause of cancer death in men,” or “one in eight women will be diagnosed with breast cancer in their lifetime.” These remarks are worrying and, to some extent, histrionic. The good news is, you have more control over your health than you think, *depending on your locus of control.*

According to Psychcentral, locus of control is defined as:



*The extent to which people believe they have power over events in their lives. A person with an internal **locus of control** believes that he or she can influence events and their outcomes, while someone with an external **locus of control** blames outside forces for everything.*

According to the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS)

a total of 2,712,620 deaths were registered in the United States in 2015. The ten leading causes of death accounted for 74.2 percent of all deaths. They are: heart disease, cancer, chronic lower respiratory diseases, unintended injuries, stroke, Alzheimer's disease, diabetes, influenza and pneumonia, kidney disease, and suicide.

Here's some perspective: Only 23 percent of these deaths were caused by heart disease and 22 percent by ALL cancers. 5.5 percent of deaths were from chronic lower respiratory diseases which ranked a distant third.

Regarding the cancer stats, when compared with data from the SEER program (Surveillance, Epidemiology, and End Results), a branch of the National Cancer Institute, the 50,000 colon cancer deaths only accounted for 2 percent of all deaths. 3 percent of annual deaths were from breast cancer. And in men, prostate cancer is the cause of only 2.5 percent of all annual deaths.

Was that a collective sigh of relief I just heard?

Moreover, experts assert that screening and early detection of both heart disease and cancer will NOT make as big an impact on health outcomes as prevention. In fact, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) claim that healthier eating, increasing physical activity, and avoiding tobacco could prevent about 900,000 of the 2.7 million deaths. That's about one third of all deaths annually!

Finally, they all agree that the "real impact on health will come when patients understand the dramatic role that lifestyle plays on actual health outcomes."

Bottom line: Your locus of control will have the greatest impact on your health over your lifetime.

To your health!

As you may know, I've been doing a weekly "Q&A with Leyla" podcast feature with Dr. Hoffman. Now you can get my perspective and expertise every Friday on my own episode of the *Intelligent Medicine* Podcast. If you missed last week's, you can listen here. To be sure you don't miss out on any of my important insights and information, subscribe today!