

in psychiatric hospitals the number of cases reported was 36,185. In terms of the number of separations, the three most common diagnoses in general hospitals were neurotic disorders, affective psychoses and alcohol dependence syndrome; whereas in psychiatric hospitals the three most common diagnoses were schizophrenia, affective psychoses and personality disorders.

**Heart disease** caused almost one in three deaths in 1987. Over the past decade, death rates have been declining. The Canada Health Survey showed that about 800,000 Canadians had heart problems in 1979; over half were persons of working age. It was estimated that heart problems caused 300,000 persons to be restricted in their daily activities and over 100,000 persons to have disability days. Over 150,000 patients separated from hospital in 1984-85 were treated for heart disease.

**Cancer** accounted for more than one of every four deaths, in 1987; 35% of persons who died from cancer were in their working years or younger. Over the previous decade the death rate gradually increased due largely to a 50% increase in deaths from cancer of the respiratory system. Over 237,570 patients treated for active or suspected cancer were separated from hospital in 1984-85.

**Respiratory diseases** have had a relatively stable overall pattern with a small increase proportionate to the population increase. These diseases strike at all ages, though 78% of fatal illness occurs after age 65. The average hospital stay is seven to eight days.

**Fatal cerebrovascular disease (stroke)** is primarily a condition of old age, with only 15% of deaths occurring before age 65. More men than women are admitted to hospital, but the days of care provided in hospital for women suffering from stroke exceeds that for men by over 30%.

**Accidents and violence.** Accidental injuries, poisoning, suicides and assaults in 1984 resulted in 14,001 deaths and 366,417 persons discharged from general hospitals. Of the deaths, 70% were male and 30% were female, and of the persons discharged from hospitals, 57% were male and 43% female. However, the length of hospital stay was higher for females (16 days) than males (11 days), resulting in the utilization of 2,565,574 patient days by females and 2,275,221 patient days for males.

**Alcohol-related problems** are a major social and health issue in our society. The number of cases separated in 1984-85 from psychiatric hospitals and general hospitals with a primary diagnosis of alcohol dependence syndrome and alcoholic psychoses was 24,361 and accounted for 570,342

patient days. In 1972 there were 35,326 separations reported utilizing 794,891 patient days. Of the separations in 1984-85, 88% were male and 12% were female with a median age of 47 and 45, respectively.

**Notifiable diseases** are communicable diseases which physicians are required by law to report so that public health officials are aware of possible epidemics and may determine the effectiveness of public health programs such as immunization. The data represent cases and not individuals. The rate of reported cases of tuberculosis has continued to decline throughout the 1970s and 1980s; the rate of 7.7 per 100,000 in 1987 was less than one-half of the rate in 1971 (21.2). Measles vaccine has been in use in Canada since the mid-1960s, and since the early 1980s all provinces have given measles elimination a high priority through immunization and education programs. The rate of reported cases of measles declined sharply in the early 1980s, dropping from 57.7 per 100,000 in 1980 to 3.8 per 100,000 in 1983. The increase in the rate observed in 1986 indicates that there may be a number of children with inadequate immunization. (*Canada Diseases Weekly Report, Volume 13-6, February 1987.*) In the area of sexually transmitted disease, the rate of reported cases of gonococcal infections has declined since 1981, from 231.4 cases per 100,000 population, to 109.0 per 100,000 in 1987, while the rate for cases of syphilis remains about the same as that observed in the early 1980s. Since the early 1980s public health officials have become increasingly concerned about the incidence of Acquired Immuno-deficiency Syndrome (AIDS). (National Advisory Committee on Aids, *Aids in Canada: What You Should Know, Health and Welfare Canada, 1986.*) AIDS is caused by a virus which attacks the body's immune system. Most persons with AIDS have been exposed to the virus through sexual contact with infected individuals; it has also occurred in a small number of people who received blood products or blood transfusions from donors infected with the virus. From the first case of AIDS diagnosed in Canada in 1979, the number has risen rapidly and totalled 2,118 cases by October 1988; one half of these persons with AIDS (54%) have died.

## 3.2 Canadian health system

### 3.2.1 Government responsibility

The only specific references to health matters in the distribution of legislative powers between the two levels of government under the Constitution Act, 1867 (formerly the British North America