



2.10 Health Problems of the Elderly

2.10.1 Diseases and Deficiencies in the Elderly

According to the 2001 survey on quality of life of Thai people aged 60 years and over, the most common illnesses among the elderly are hypertension, diabetes, joint diseases, asthma, and paresis (Figure 5.60).

Another survey conducted by the National Statistical Office in 2002 revealed that the first 5 illnesses that elderly people had are body ache (including backache and joint pain), insomnia, vertigo, eye diseases, dementia and hypertension. These illnesses are more prevalent with age (Table 5.32), and the prevalence is higher in females than in males (Table 5.33). The 2006 survey on risks of Thai elders, conducted by the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, revealed that three-fourths of all elders had commonly found illnesses, i.e. hypertension, bone/joint diseases, diabetes, eye diseases and cardiovascular disease.

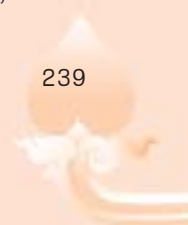
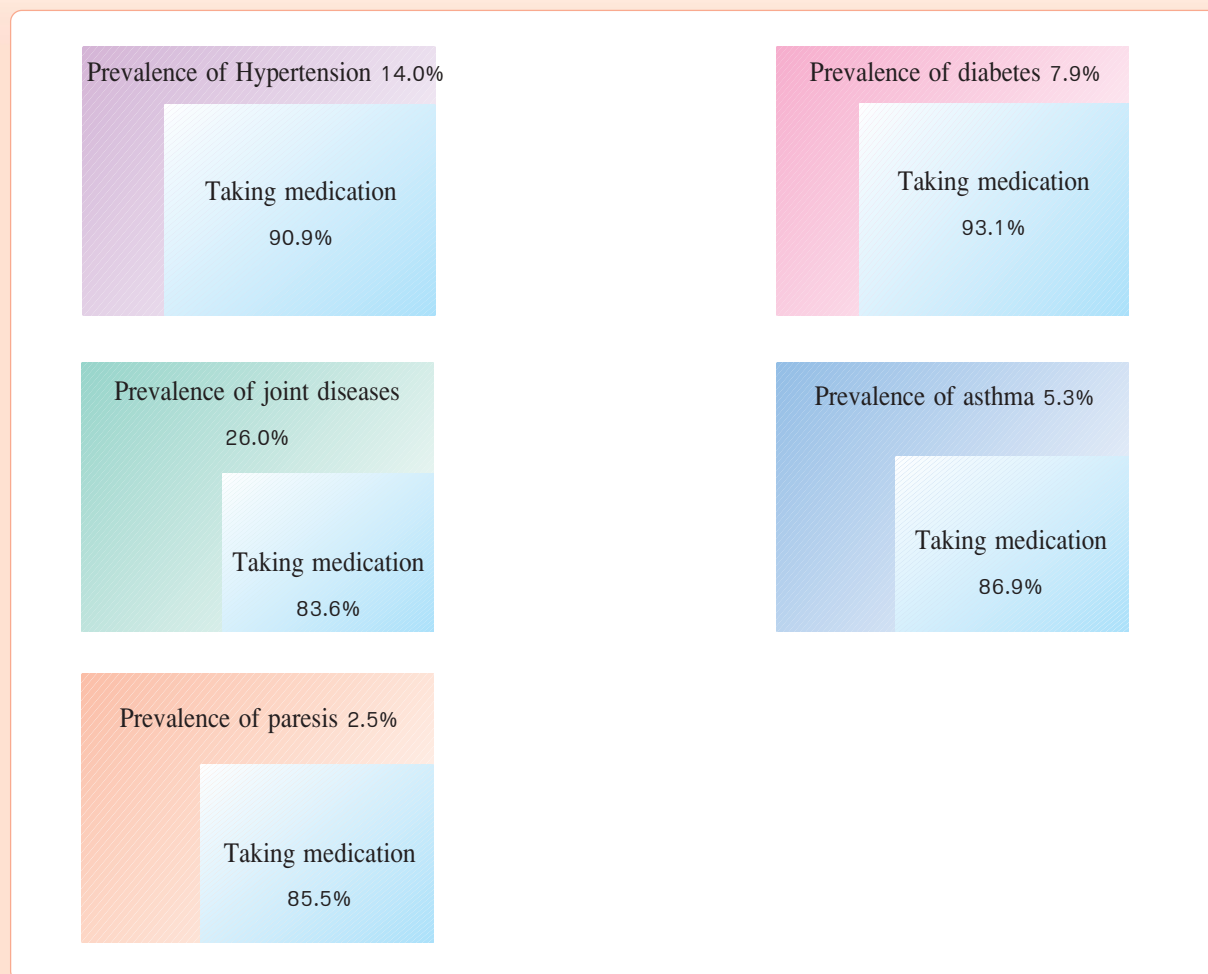


Figure 5.60 Prevalence of illnesses among Thai elderly people, 2001



Source: Institute of Geriatric Medicine. A Survey on Quality of Life of Thai Elderly People, 2001.



Table 5.32 Proportion (percentage) of Thai elders with most common diseases/symptoms by age group, 1994 and 2002

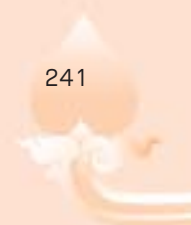
Disease/Symptom	1994					2002				
	Total	60-64 yrs	65-69 yrs	70-74 yrs	75 yrs and over	Total	60-64 yrs	65-69 yrs	70-74 yrs	75 yrs and over
- Body ache, backache	-	-	-	-	-	75.1	72.7	74.7	77.8	77.3
- Joint pain (degenerative)	72.4	68.5	73.7	73.8	76.9	47.5	42.8	46.7	49.8	54.9
- Insomnia	44.7	40.2	44.8	46.6	52.0	38.7	34.1	38.1	42.0	44.9
- Vertigo	49.2	46.8	45.7	51.6	56.9	36.8	34.4	35.6	38.7	41.2
- Eye diseases	43.0	35.6	40.6	48.5	56.0	33.2	27.5	31.1	37.3	42.8
- Dementia	27.2	21.7	22.9	32.1	40.2	29.8	22.3	26.5	33.2	45.2
- Hyper/hypotension	25.0	22.3	25.7	27.4	26.8	20.0	17.7	20.3	21.9	21.6

Source: Surveys on Elderly People in Thailand, 1994 and 2002, National Statistical Office.

Table 5.33 Proportion (percentage) of Thai elders with most common diseases/symptoms by sex, 1994 and 2002

Disease/Symptom	1994			2002		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
- Body ache, backache	-	-	-	75.1	73.0	76.8
- Joint pain (degenerative)	72.4	67.3	76.5	47.5	43.5	50.8
- Insomnia	44.7	36.5	51.4	38.7	33.7	42.9
- Vertigo	49.2	38.9	57.6	36.8	27.8	44.4
- Eye diseases	43.0	39.1	46.1	33.2	30.6	35.3
- Dementia	27.2	23.8	30.0	29.8	26.6	32.5
- Hyper/hypotension	25.0	22.1	27.3	20.0	17.6	22.0

Source: Surveys on Elderly People in Thailand, 1994 and 2002, National Statistical Office.



2.10.2 Rising Trends in Health Problems of the Elderly

The diseases that are health problems with rising trends are the following:

(1) **Hypertension** is a major health problem of the elderly that has a rising trend (Table 5.34) and is correlated with the economic and social development of society. Urban residents are more likely to have hypertension than rural residents. Besides, according to the World Health Report, it was estimated that in 2000 hypertension was the cause of 7.1 million deaths or approximately 13% of all deaths worldwide and it was also the cause of loss in non-fatal health status or loss of healthy life years.

Table 5.34 Trends and prevalence of hypertension among Thai elders in urban and rural areas, 1985-1998

Residence	Prevalence, percent								
	1985	1986	1988	1989	1991	1992	1995	1996	1998
Urban	28		26		15.8 ^{+#}		26 ^{**#}	44.4 [#]	36.5
Rural		23.3		18 [*]	11.1 ^{+#}	8.8 [*]	15.3 ^{**#}	23.6 [#]	

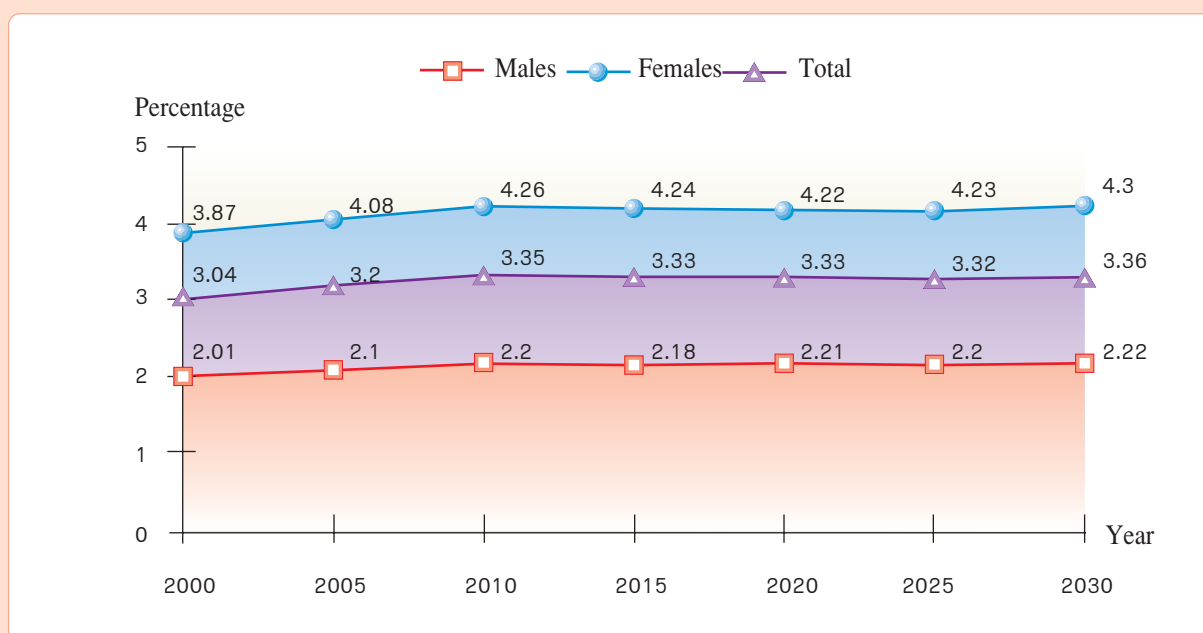
Source: Sutthichai Jitapunkul. The Spread of Chronic Diseases and Disabilities in Thailand: A Hypothesis Based on the Data from Studies on the Elderly, 2000.

Notes: * Criteria used only for hypertension + Age 65⁺ yrs
 ** Criteria used only for history taking # National survey



(2) **Dementia** is increasingly an important problem affecting the quality of life of the patients, caregivers, and society. A study on the prevalence of dementia among Thai elders reveals that at present the prevalence is 3.04% and is projected to be 3.4% in 2030 (the female to male ratio being 2:1) (Figure 5.61). Besides, the prevalence of dementia is rising with age. A screening test of elders' brains reveals a rising proportion of both male and female elders with brain defects which might be dementia, more prevalent in females than in males (Table 5.35). However, the prevalence of this disease in Thai elders is lower than that in American elders, but when considering the prevalence in each age group, their rates of increase are comparable (Table 5.36).

Figure 5.61 Projection of dementia prevalence in the elderly, 2000-2030



Source: Thai Health Research Institute, National Health Foundation, and Bureau of Health Policy and Planning, MoPH. Report on a Study of Health Problems among Thai Elders, 1998.

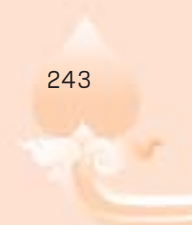


Table 5.35 Results of brain screening examinations of the elderly by sex and age

Sex	Age (years)	Dementia (%)
Male	60-69	16.3
	70-79	27.0
	80 ⁺	47.2
	Total	23.8
Female	60-69	22.1
	70-79	38.6
	80 ⁺	70.3
	Total	35.2

Source: Report on Health Examination Survey, Thailand, Third Round, 2003-2004. Health Systems Research Institute.

Table 5.36 Comparison of dementia prevalence among Thai and American elders

Age (years)	Prevalence	
	Thai elders	American elders
60 - 64	1%	-
65 - 69	2%	2.5%
70 - 74	3%	5%
75 - 79	5%	10%
80 - 84	7.5%	15%
85 - 89	12.5%	30%
90+	30%	-

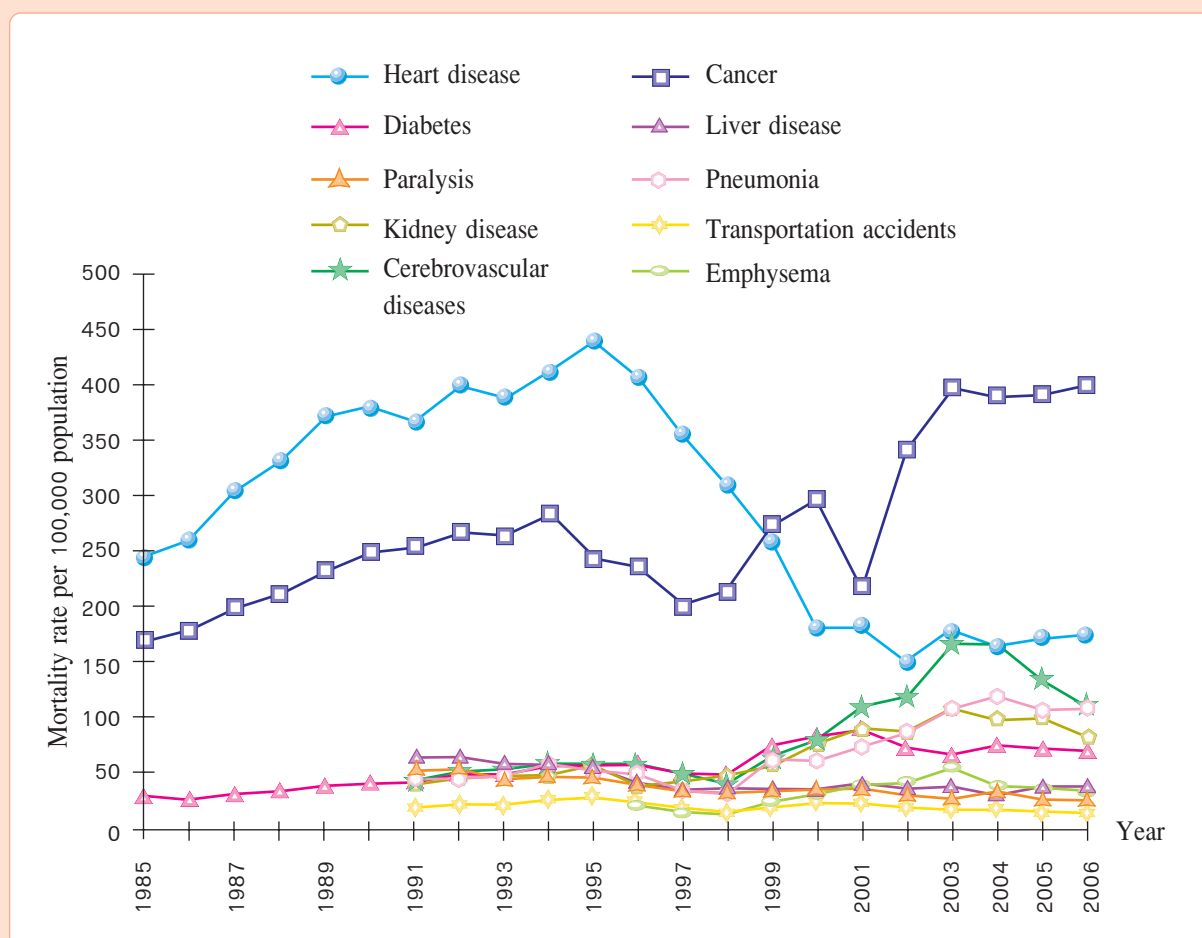
Source: Sutthichai Jitapunkul, Napaporn Chayovan and Jiraporn Kespichaywattana. "National Policies on Ageing and Long-term Care Provision for Older Persons in Thailand" in David R. Phillips and Alfred C.M. Chan (eds). Ageing and Long-term Care: National Policies in the Asia-Pacific. Bestprint Printing Co., Singapore, 2002.



(3) Major Causes of Death in the Elderly

Among the elderly, the most common causes of death are, in order of magnitude, cancer, heart disease, cerebrovascular disease, pneumonia, kidney disease and diabetes. It has been found that the mortality rate per 100,000 population from cancer has risen from 169.1 in 1985 to 402.5 in 2006. The rate of mortality due to cerebrovascular disease (per 100,000 population) has also risen from 54.9 in 1996 to 110.9 in 2006. The rates of mortality have also risen for diabetes from 28.8 to 71.3 for the same period and for pneumonia from 42.0 in 1991 to 110.3 in 2006 (Figure 5.62 and Table 5.37).

Figure 5.62 Mortality rates of major causes of death in the elderly, 1985-2006



Source: Bureau of Policy and Strategy, Ministry of Public Health.

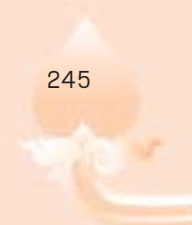


Table 5.37 Mortality rates of diabetes, heart disease, cancer, paralysis, liver diseases, kidney diseases, pneumonia, transportation accidents, cerebrovascular disease, and emphysema among the elderly, 1985-2006

Year	Mortality rate per 100,000 population among the elderly									
	Diabetes	Heart diseases	Cancer	Liver diseases	Kidney diseases	Paralysis	Pneumonia	Transportation accidents	Cerebrovascular diseases	Emphysema
1985	28.8	245.0	169.1	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
1986	24.9	259.3	177.6	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
1987	30.3	304.3	199.1	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
1988	32.4	331.1	209.6	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
1989	37.2	372.3	231.9	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
1990	39.4	379.2	248.8	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
1991	39.9	386.7	253.9	62.6	38.3	49.5	42.0	16.9	n.a.	n.a.
1992	49.5	400.3	266.8	63.4	48.0	51.5	42.3	20.1	n.a.	n.a.
1993	50.8	389.7	262.9	57.1	45.9	42.4	45.3	19.5	n.a.	n.a.
1994	57.2	412.2	283.9	56.3	47.5	44.9	56.0	24.1	n.a.	n.a.
1995	56.2	440.7	242.1	52.2	55.3	45.5	51.0	26.3	n.a.	n.a.
1996	57.4	407.5	236.2	41.4	38.2	37.4	46.8	22.4	54.9	18.4
1997	48.5	356.1	199.4	33.1	40.5	32.0	33.7	17.1	49.1	13.3
1998	47.7	310.0	213.0	34.4	46.7	31.3	28.9	13.3	38.0	11.0
1999	74.8	257.7	273.7	34.0	56.1	32.3	61.1	18.5	63.8	23.0
2000	82.1	179.9	297.6	34.0	75.5	33.9	59.9	22.6	79.7	29.5
2001	88.4	182.2	218.2	40.6	89.6	34.8	73.0	21.5	110.1	38.8
2002	72.1	149.4	342.6	35.5	87.2	29.2	85.5	18.9	118.7	40.2
2003	66.7	177.1	399.5	38.3	108.0	26.8	107.4	16.7	166.8	54.9
2004	75.8	163.8	393.1	30.7	98.9	32.8	119.2	17.3	166.3	37.7
2005	73.0	172.3	393.6	39.5	100.3	26.6	107.8	16.2	134.3	37.4
2006	71.3	175.3	402.5	39.2	83.0	25.9	110.3	15.2	110.9	35.1

Source: Bureau of Policy and Strategy, Ministry of Public Health.

Note: n.a. = Data not available