According to recent statistics from the American Center for Disease Control (CDC), the number of people suffering from serious diseases has increased when compared to ten years ago. This raises the questions:

Why has this happened?

and

What can be done to stop it?

The expectation was that this number would decrease thanks to advances in medical science which have helped in the fight against illnesses.

Anemia, for example, is now a treatable disorder but this alone is not enough to get rid of the larger problem of heart disease which now affects over 26.5 million people in America and is largely caused by poor diet.

On the other hand modern medicine has proved very effective in combating meningitis, with new treatments offered for both viral and bacterial versions of the disease. Polio, which was one of the major concerns of the last century, is close to being eradicated with only a few outbreaks in certain parts of the developing world.

There are of course many diseases which remain incurable such as acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS), which although is far from the levels of near epidemic of the 1980’s remains a major concern for world healthcare. Modern medicine has developed a way to treat for AIDS but has yet to find a cure. Another incurable illness is influenza (flu), which although affecting over 10% of the population of the western world is only treatable proactively in the form of a vaccination. So while medical advances have made it possible to treat, cure or even eradicate illness there are still many conditions which remain dangerous.

When thinking about why the number of people suffering from serious diseases is so high, you have to look both at the current state of medical knowledge and also trends in patients' lifestyles. The number of reported sexually transmitted diseases (STD's) has increased steadily over the past 50 years partly as a result of acceptance of the diseases and partly as the young generation tends to take more risks than their parents did.

Chlamydia is a good example of this, figures released by the World Health Organization (WHO) indicate that there was a 7% rise in the number of cases of Chlamydia in the US in 2012 when compared to the previous year. The increase was highest among teens, who may not even realize that they have an infectious disease or are too embarrassed to report
it straightaway which may in-turn lead to infertility.

The answer to the question "What can be done to stop the trend of increasing levels of disease?" may be as simple as education. If people knew the risks associated with their current lifestyle, they may be encouraged to make some change which would spare them future illness. A great example of this can be seen in the European approach to reducing lung cancer rates by running public information adverts on the dangers of smoking. Or on a smaller scale, in programs to educate children on the causes of diabetes and how to avoid contracting it.

While it may not be possible for medicine to fight against every disease, the number of terminal diseases is decreasing and if this is combined with education on how to lead a healthier life - the future looks good.

**Discussion Questions**

Why do you think certain diseases remain incurable? write 100-120 words

How much impact does a person's lifestyle have on their health?

Which diseases / illnesses can be prevented? How?