

Abstract

The Impact of Chronic Diseases on Disability-free Life Expectancy among the Thai Elderly Population

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The objective of this study was to investigate the changes in disability-free life expectancy after the elimination of specific diseases in the elderly population. Data on health status were derived from the 2002 Survey of the Elderly in Thailand conducted by the National Statistical Office. Mortality information was obtained from the vital registration system of the Ministry of Interior and the Verbal Autopsy Study of 16 provinces in Thailand conducted by the Ministry of Public Health. Population data were also drawn from the vital registration system. Cause-deleted disability-free life expectancy was estimated by the Sullivan method using the cause-deleted prevalence of disability in the cause-elimination life tables, assuming the independence among causes of death and disability. It was found that while eliminating fatal diseases such as cancer and heart diseases led to an increase in disability-free life expectancy, life expectancy with disability would increase too. This resulted in an increasing burden to society. On the other hand, the elimination of chronic non-fatal but disabling diseases such as neuro-psychiatric diseases and arthritis not only led to an increase in disability-free life expectancy, but also to a decline in life expectancy with disability. In order to improve the quality of life of the Thai elderly and to reduce the burden of elderly care on society, a more effort should be made to reduce chronic disabling non-fatal diseases.