

Successful health promotion campaigns could be expected to reduce the number of middle aged adults who would need bypass surgery and the full effect would be seen in 20-25 years.

Unfortunately there are a few people who develop heart disease in spite of good health behaviour and at present we do not know how to prevent this.

To compensate for the reduction in cases that result from health promotion there will be an increase in the number of people to whom the technique can be applied. Whereas now bypass surgery tends to be offered only to middle aged people, it will be desirable to make it available in future to older people who could also benefit from the improved quality of life it brings. There would also be a benefit to the health and related services as more elderly people could be kept mobile and active longer by this means.

(b) Valve surgery

There has been a gradual reduction in the number of patients requiring valve surgery following rheumatic fever due to a healthier environment and better medical treatment reducing its incidence. By now most of this effect has been felt.

Degenerative mitral valve lesions are, if anything, becoming commoner, and calcific aortic valve disease is as frequent as before.

(c) Congenital cardiac abnormalities

Some reduction can be hoped for with improved acceptance of rubella immunisation and advances in techniques for pre-natal diagnosis of congenital abnormalities.

(d) The overall effect of health promotion

Health promotion alone is unlikely to achieve a significant reduction in the need for adult cardiac surgery for 25 years or so.

2.6 Conclusion

Our aim to provide 500-600 operations per million population appears to be justified.

3. THE NEED FOR A CARDIAC SURGERY UNIT BASED IN DEVON AND CORNWALL

3.1 With a population of 3.2 million the residents of the South Western Region could expect to have performed annually:

1280-1600 coronary artery bypass operations or angioplasties
 320 valve operations
 128 paediatric heart operations

1728-1948 total heart operations
