

Heart failure: coping with one of the world's biggest killers

Patients are learning to live with a chronic disease that will affect one in 5 people over age 40.

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One in 5 people over age 40 around the world will develop heart failure in their lifetime. About 25% of them will die within a year of diagnosis and 50% are dead within five years.

"I heard my doctor say 'heart failure' and it sounded like a death sentence," said Nick Hartshorne-Evans, a patient in the UK who was diagnosed five years ago. "The word 'failure' is very difficult to hear psychologically."

After the initial shock of diagnosis, many struggle with how to maintain their quality of life. Fortunately, information is widely available and new treatment options are on the horizon for this chronic disease.

Heart failure changed my life. But I'm not giving up. The most important thing I've learned since my diagnosis is to be alive.

Jean Leonard, founder of a patient support organization

More than 14 million people suffer from heart failure in the EU and over 3.5 million people are diagnosed with heart failure every year in Europe.*

Pensioner Jean Leonard was diagnosed with heart failure in 2009 and soon after set up a patient support body in France. The organization, called ASPIC, provides advice booklets and other guidance for patients and those caring for someone with heart failure about how to live with the condition.

"Heart failure changed my life. But I'm not giving up. The most important thing I've learned since my diagnosis is to be alive," said Leonard.

Watch our short video to see how he and others are learning to live with heart failure.

Our source:

Mosterd A, Hoes AW. Clinical epidemiology of heart failure. Heart. 2007 Sep;93(9):1137-46.

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