

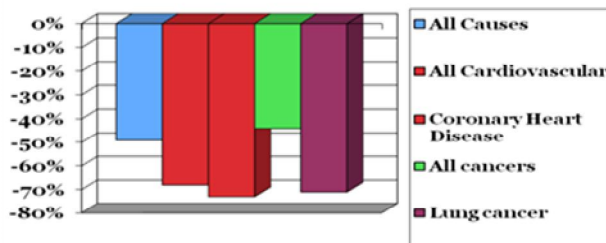
February 4, 2010

To the members of the St. Croix County Community Health Improvement Planning Group,

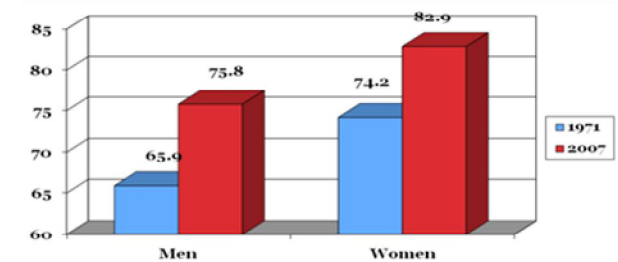
I regret that clinical responsibilities prevent me from being with you today as you plan to take the next steps in improving the health of St. Croix County. I am a consultant to the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute and am gratified that you are using the tools that they have provided. Your efforts can have a stunning impact on health.

I've worked with a similar project in Finland since the early 1970s, and as the graphics show, mortality rates have dropped markedly and life expectancy has increased nearly ten years. The increase in life expectancy is nearly 4 months every year, year after year.

Mortality Changes in North Karelian (Finland)
Men Ages 35-64 years: 1970-1995



Increasing Life Expectancy: Finland



Personal communication: Pekka Puska. 2008.11.04

We know that quality of life and productivity both closely parallel life expectancy, so not only are the Finnish people living longer, they are living happier and more productively. The evidence indicates that a sustained initiative in St. Croix County could have a similar effect. The four key behaviors to pursue are good nutrition, adequate physical activity, avoidance of tobacco, and elimination of hazardous drinking.

I do urge you to recruit the business community to participate in your health improvement efforts. Not only do worksite health management programs reduce health care costs, they increase productivity. Workers who are offered health management at work miss work less often and are more productive when they are at work.

I know that I will be able to join your group for a more detailed discussion at a later date, but for now, I simply congratulate you for your initiative.

Sincerely,

Thomas E. Kottke, MD, MSPH
Medical Director for Evidence-Based Health
HealthPartners