



## Press Release

# Chronic Disease: Individual-Level Factors and Policy Options

ANDREW EVANS | NOVEMBER 16, 2020

Chronic disease will affect approximately half of Americans at some point in their lifetimes, costing the United States an estimated \$3.7 trillion annually. In new research, AAF's Director of Human Welfare Policy Tara O'Neill Hayes and Serena Gillian examine a number of individual-level factors that contribute to chronic disease and outline potential policy responses. Interventions early and late in life, policies that increase access to physical and mental health services, as well as economic policies that foster productivity and income growth could all help mitigate the development or worsening of chronic conditions, they contend.

An excerpt:

Improving access to mental health services could significantly reduce the likelihood of developing multiple chronic diseases. While the Affordable Care Act expanded mental health parity laws...many Americans still lack access to mental health care providers. There are more than 119 million Americans currently estimated to be living in areas with a shortage of mental health professionals, with just more than a quarter of the nation's need being met. This shortage means that many are not receiving care at all and others are having to wait to receive care when time is likely of the essence. Increasing the availability of providers via telehealth may help some who are physically too far from an available provider, but given the extent of the overall shortage nationwide, telehealth cannot completely resolve the access issue.