

Medical staff report an increase in the incidence of respiratory diseases in both adults and children, particularly in large urban centres. Control of cholera is another area of concern, since 43 cases were reported in 1993.

AIDS is recognized as a growing problem in Mexico. Nationally, the number of known cases rose by 89 percent between 1992 and 1993 and the increase was even larger in several major centres. Investment in AIDS prevention, diagnosis and care has begun to increase and this trend is expected to continue. Awareness campaigns and telephone hotlines are being used throughout the country as part of a national familiarization program.

Interviews with Mexican health care workers report a growing incidence of "first world diseases" such as heart ailments, hypertension, cancers and diabetes. This trend is expected to continue as life expectancy increases, the population ages, and disposable income improves. Surgeons have reported an increased number of organ transplants and laparoscopic surgery.

INSTITUTIONAL VERSUS HOME CARE

Home care has not traditionally been part of the organized health care system, but it is nonetheless very much a part of the Mexican culture. Families care for their ill, injured, disabled or aging relatives, but there has been little formal recognition or support for home care. Women have traditionally been the main home caregivers. As Mexico's middle class grows, more women will be employed outside the home and this will contribute to a growing market in this sector.

The pressure for hospitals to cut costs by reducing the number of hospitalization days is likely to increase demand for home care services. There is also a need for education and training, human resource assistance and physical infrastructure. The latter would include assistive devices and palliative care units in the hospital system.

2. THE ROLE OF FOREIGN TRADE

Mexico's purchases of imported medical devices and equipment increased by 133 percent, from US \$260 million to US \$607 million, over the period 1990 to 1993. Imports of the more technologically-sophisticated products increased even faster. For example, imports of pacemakers were up by 210 percent, electro-cardiographs by 179 percent and X-ray equipment by 289 percent. Specific product opportunities are discussed in greater detail in Section 6.

Traditionally, Canada's medical equipment trade with Mexico has been very small. Exports to Mexico totaled only about \$1* million in 1990. Imports from Mexico have also been marginal.

* Note: Unless otherwise specified, currency used is Canadian dollars.

