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Diabetes, dementia, ischemic heart disease, drug-related diseases, myocardial infarction, and heart failure are all leading causes of death in the United States, with their long-term trends embedded in the mainstream theory of epidemiological transitions. However, these transitions are based exclusively on underlying causes of death (UCD), which account for only 25% of the total medical information recorded on death certificates. How does our understanding of cause-specific mortality change when all conditions recorded on death certificates are considered? This study presents cause-specific mortality dynamics in a Lexis surface for the U.S. from 1960 to 2022, focusing on current leading causes of death and offering an "alternative perspective" on mortality trends by cause. This perspective reveals several novel findings: for example, an increase in dementia-related mortality was evident much earlier than suggested by UCD data. Moreover, a condition now referred to as "dementia" was most likely previously recorded as an unspecified nervous disease. Similar unexpected patterns emerge for other diseases as well, demonstrating that UCD reflects only the "tip of the iceberg" of disease burden in the population.