

Title

The HELP Survey: a true picture of the hypertensive population in Belgium.

Abstract:

Traditional antihypertensive therapy demonstrated efficacy in reducing blood pressure. However most studies in hypertension are performed in patients with selected criteria while the characteristics of the overall hypertensive population are not known. To fill this gap, a survey named: « Hypertension Evaluation in a Large Population » was organized with Belgian general practitioners (G.P.) between April and August 1996. They recorded basic characteristics (age, sex, BMI, current antihypertensive therapy, medical history) and systolic and diastolic blood pressure levels on the first twenty office diagnosed essential hypertensive patients during the survey.

So 17,983 hypertensives (42% men; 58% women) were screened by 924 G.P. Mean age was 63 ± 13 years, mean BMI was 28 ± 5 kg/m². Mean SBP and DBP were 147 ± 17 mmHg and 85 ± 10 mmHg in treated patients, corresponding BP in untreated were 152 ± 19 and 90 ± 12 mmHg.

Ninety-four (94.4) percent of the patients were on antihypertensive medication with 45.3% receiving beta-blockers, 35.4% diuretics, 33.6% calcium antagonists, 31.3% ACE inhibitors and 10.3% other antihypertensive medications. No difference is observed between gender except a higher rate of diuretics prescription in women. Beta-blockers are less prescribed with increasing age conversely to calcium antagonists and diuretics.

Monotherapy is the more frequent treatment approach in men and women: 48.6%, bitherapy concerns 33% and tritherapy is observed in 15%. Untreated patients were significantly younger, leaner and more often smokers.

About 8 percent (7.6%) of the patients has suffered from myocardial infarction (men 12.4%; women 4.1%), 16.1% complained of coronary heart disease (men 18.9%; women 14.0%), 6.7% had stroke (men 7.6%; women 5.9%) 17.4% had diabetes (men 14.1%; women 15.1%), 7.7% had COLD (men 11.1%; women 5.3%).

The characteristics gathered during the HELP Survey will be compared in the future with the characteristics of the patients included in large studies in hypertension.