

A few Indians know their BP and fewer among them get treatment

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New Delhi: World Hypertension Day is celebrated every year on 17th of May to raise the public awareness about hypertension, its preventive measures and complications.

Inspite of the fact that hypertension affects large numbers of people in rural as well as urban areas in India, very few people actually acknowledge that they have high blood pressure. Fewer among them get their blood pressure checked regularly.

These are some of the initial findings of a new study which aims to estimate prevalence, awareness and treatment of hypertension and identify barriers to hypertension control in rural communities in India. The study, “Control of Hypertension in Rural India” (CHIRI), is funded by the Global Alliance for Chronic Disease (GACD) and the National Health and Medical Research Council of Australia (NHMRC) and aims to develop strategies to better manage hypertension in rural communities.

Research done earlier from The George Institute for Global Health in rural Andhra Pradesh found that 29% of the adult population had hypertension, and of these only 44% were being treated.

“Very little is known about the emergence of hypertension in rural India, where 70% of the Indian population still resides,” says Dr. Pallab Maulik, Deputy Director, Research and Development at The George Institute for Global Health India, adding that “while people should get their blood pressure checked regularly, we still do not know

There is some evidence that barriers to hypertension control differ according to the stage of transition of the population.

“An improved understanding of the awareness of hypertension in different settings and the barriers to prevention, diagnosis and treatment will provide the critical knowledge base we need to overcome these barriers in these differing settings,” added Dr. Pallab.

The study is part of a larger co-ordinated funding effort by member organizations of the Global Alliance for Chronic Diseases (GACD) on hypertension prevention and control in low and middle-income countries (LMICs) that focuses on implementing effective approaches to control high blood pressure through community-based research projects.

Government funded agencies including the Indian Council of Medical Research, is a member of the GACD. Australia’s National Health and Medical Research Council, one of the member organizations of GACD, is supporting five of these projects.

Each research project is conducted through a partnership between investigators in a high-income country institution and investigators in LMIC.

“With a focus on implementing effective interventions that can be used within LMICs and potentially expanded to similar environments, the projects provide a unique opportunity for researchers to collaborate and share study findings on a global level and to help further address global health disparities,” says Dr. Rohina Joshi, Senior Research Fellow, The George Institute for Global Health, Australia and The University of Sydney.

Hypertension is a condition in which the blood pressure is elevated to a level at or above 140/90 mmHg. This medical condition is called a silent killer as it does not show any clear symptoms, however, severe hypertension shows some symptoms such as headaches, sleepiness, palpitations, blurred vision, fatigue, dizziness, confusion, ringing sensation in the ears, breathing difficulty, or irregular heartbeat which may lead to even stroke.

The study is being done in collaboration with Monash University, The George Institute for Global Health India and Australia, Sree Chitra Tirunal Institute for Medical Sciences and Technology, Rishi Valley Rural Health Centre and Christian Medical College Vellore. It is being conducted in areas around Trivandrum and rural communities in Chittoor and West Godavari districts of Andhra Pradesh. The study in the West Godavari area is being led by The George Institute.