



EDITORIAL

EDITORIAL: HYPERTENSION IN DEVELOPING SOCIETIES

Hypertension is defined as abnormally high blood pressure. It can occur as isolated systolic hypertension when systolic pressure is above 140mmHg and diastolic pressure is between 50mmHg and 80mmHg. Isolated diastolic hypertension occurs when diastolic blood pressure is above 80mmHg and systolic blood pressure is normal. Hypertension was once perceived as a disease for developed societies. However, data from various studies conducted in developing societies suggest hypertension is on the rise in all societies.

Hypertension is on the increase in developing societies due to increased urbanization, improved living standards which include longevity, change in dietary habits and increase in social stress.

Hypertension tends to be underdiagnosed and poorly controlled due to inadequate health infrastructure, poverty and inexperience.

More than one third of adults in Africa are hypertensive. This is driven largely by urbanization. Hypertension is closely related to cardiovascular disease adverse events. Most of the people with hypertension tend to have uncontrolled diseases for prolonged periods of time.

To mitigate the effects of this disease and possibly reduce cardiovascular events such as coronary artery disease, heart failure and stroke, urgent public health measures are needed. These include measures to improve early diagnosis through periodic screening using community health workers and workplaces; and improved drug supply and their efficient delivery to rural health facilities. Public awareness of effects of hypertension should be an integral part of health care in level 3 health facilities and above.



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