



Hypertension is the Most Serious Global Health Problem

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Editorial

More than a quarter of the world's adult population has hypertension. The World Health Organisation has declared, that elevated blood pressure is the largest global health problem, mainly due to an excessive number of strokes, but also to coronary heart disease, heart failure, morbidity and mortality. The treatment of CHD - mortality has decreased around 50% in the last 20-30 years, but the stroke morbidity and mortality has almost not changed. Prevention must be focused. If systolic blood pressure is 180 mm Hg in a 50 to 59 year old man and woman the risk for a stroke is calculated to be 16 times greater, than if the systolic pressure is 120 mm Hg. For the age groups 80 to 89 the risk for 180 mm Hg is almost 200 times greater compared to 120 mm Hg [1].

The quality of life is very much decreased for stroke victims: hemiparesis, speech troubles, blurred vision, dementia, depression and more. Unfortunately hypertension has no or only minor symptoms, thus the first symptoms are often a stroke, a disaster. The recommended value for optimal the treatment of hypertension is: $\leq 140/90$ mm Hg. In Europe this goal is only reached by around 20% of the hypertensives, but in U.S the number is much better $> 50\%$. W.H.O. recommends the salt intake to a maximum of 5 grams per day. In 1960's the Japanese salt intake was very high, 30 gram salt a day, 40% had hypertension and there were 350 strokes per 100.000 inhabitants per year. Then the Government introduced less salt in the food in the supermarkets, the intake of salt were reduced to 10 mg a day, and the rate of stroke reduced to 50 per 100.000 [2]. The advice must be that all men and women should have the blood pressure measured, latest when they are 30 to 40 years, earlier if father or mother has hypertension. Physical activity will also reduce the blood pressure [3]. We are able to eliminate more than 50% of strokes by an effective medical treatment, combined with stop-smoking, reduced salt intake, and more physical exercise.

In conclusion to prevent stroke

1. High blood pressure should be medical treated down to < 140 mm Hg/90, especially in the elderly.
2. No smoking.
3. Salt intake < 5 grams per day.
4. Physical exercise around $\frac{1}{2}$ hour each day.

References

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