

'INDIAN ADULTS ARE UNAWARE THEY ARE AILING FROM HYPERTENSION'

Relevant for: Developmental Issues | Topic: Health & Sanitation and related issues

Hypertension is a major risk factor for cardiovascular disease, which is a leading cause of death in India.

Despite having a heavy burden of a hypertensive population, the proportion of adults with high blood pressure who are aware of their diagnosis, are treated and achieve control, is dismally low, noted the first large-scale, population-based study of hypertension care in the country.

The study, which has been published in *PLOS Medicine*, was carried out by researchers at the Public Health Foundation of India (PHFI), Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, the Heidelberg Institute of Global Health, the University of Birmingham and the University of Gottingen.

According to the study, only 3 out of 4 individuals with hypertension has ever had their blood pressure measured, only 45% had been diagnosed, and only 8% of those surveyed had their blood pressure under control.

More than half the number of Indians aged 15-49 years with hypertension were not aware of their hypertension status. Awareness level was lowest in Chhattisgarh (22.1%) and highest in Puducherry (80.5%).

Hypertension is a major risk factor for cardiovascular disease, which is a leading cause of death in India. "The study is significant as there was no population-based large-scale study from India on the steps for screening to successful control of hypertension at which people are lost from care," noted the study. For the study, researchers used the National Health and Family Survey (NFHS-4, 2015-16) data of 731,864 individuals aged 15-49 years, which covered each district in 29 States and seven Union Territories.

Dr. Dorairaj Prabhakaran, vice-president, Research and Policy, at PHFI, and one of the authors of the study, said: "Detection of hypertension is straightforward, treatments are simple yet effective, and hence hypertension can be easily controlled. However, it is an unfortunate paradox that India does not perform well in any of the measures of detection, treatment and control."

"Keeping hypertension under control can have huge benefits in terms of preventing heart attacks and strokes," said Dr. Lindsay Jaacks, faculty, Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health.

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