

HYPERTENSION IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICAN POPULATIONS: THE BURDEN OF HYPERTENSION IN NIGERIA

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Nigeria has a population of >120 million people and is the largest Black nation in the world. The crude prevalence of hypertension has been documented as 11.2% (based on blood pressure threshold of 160/95 mm Hg), with an age-adjusted ratio of 9.3%. This number translates into \approx 4.33 million Nigerian hypertensives aged \geq 15 years (according to the latest national census figure).¹ However, according to the current definition of hypertension from the seventh Joint National Committee on Prevention, Detection, Evaluation, and Treatment of High Blood Pressure (JNC 7) guidelines,² many more Nigerians (20%–25%) would be classified as hypertensive. In a study carried out by the International Collaborative Study of Hypertension in Blacks (ICSHIB), the age-adjusted prevalence of hypertension in Nigeria was 14.5% (14.7% for men and 14.3% for women).³ Major target-organ complications of hypertension, such as left ventricular hypertrophy,⁴ diastolic dysfunction,⁵ congestive heart failure,⁶ ischemic heart disease,⁷ stroke,⁸ and renal failure⁹ are well documented by various researchers in Nigeria.

In a study of cardiovascular diseases in multiple centers in Nigeria, hypertension was ranked first. Hypertension and its complications constitute \approx 25% of emergency medical admissions in urban hospitals in the country.¹⁰ It is the medical illness most frequently diagnosed in elderly Nigerians.¹¹ Ogunniyi et al studied 613 elderly Nigerians (398 women and 215 men) aged 65–110 years in a cohort at Ibadan. They reported that cardiovascular disease is the most common condition in this cohort, and hypertension (27.8%) was the most frequent diagnosis.¹² Bella et al also reported a similar figure.¹¹ High blood pressure is also the most common condition associated with dementia in Nigeria. It is the most common condition in senior executives¹³ and army recruits.¹⁴

Two autopsy studies have shown that hypertension is the most common cause of sudden unexpected natural death. Amakiri et al¹⁵ studied 876 consecutive coroners' autopsies at Ibadan and found that the most common cause of sudden natural death was cardiovascular disease, and complications of

hypertension accounted for most cases. This finding was corroborated by Aligbe et al;¹⁶ 3% of hypertensive Nigerians die each year. The population-attributable risk has been established at 7%.¹⁷

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