

HYPERTENSION, A SILENT INVISIBLE KILLER

The World Health Organization (WHO) had decided that Hypertension will be the focus of the World Health Day on 7 April 2013.

Hypertension

It rarely causes symptoms. Globally, cardiovascular disease accounts for nearly one third of the total global deaths. Hypertension is responsible for at least 45% of deaths due to heart disease, and 51% of deaths due to stroke. Currently, 80% of deaths due to cardiovascular disease occur because, the burden of hypertension has increased. It also encounters kidney diseases. According to American Journal of Kidney Diseases, the official journal of the National Kidney Foundation, researchers project a likely increase in global hypertension rates to 29% by 2025.

Causes of hypertension:

- Behavioral risk factors –consumption of unhealthy food, too much of salt intake, intake of harmful levels of alcohol, tobacco usage, physical inactivity and lack of exercise, poor stress management.
- Genetic factors.
- Preeclampsia is hypertension that occurs in some women during pregnancy. It usually resolves after the birth but it can sometimes linger, and women who experience preeclampsia are more likely to have hypertension in later life.
- Obesity, high serum cholesterol, heart disease and diabetes mellitus.

Addressing global hypertension:

- Assessing estimated glomerular filtration rate and urine protein in those with hypertension to promote early detection of kidney disease.
- Targeted training of general practitioners in optimal management of hypertension.
- Reducing salt intake through voluntary agreements with industry (i.e. makers of pickled foods, soy sauce, cereals, baked goods) and legislation to mandate salt reduction.
- Promoting awareness of healthy lifestyle changes such as increasing exercise and decreasing consumption of calorie and fat rich foods.
- Increasing awareness of the harmful effects of smoking.
- Govts should excise tax increase on tobacco and alcohol use.
- In the U.S., the National Kidney Foundation is addressing hypertension as a major risk factor for kidney disease by offering free kidney screenings through its Kidney Early Evaluation Program (KEEP) for those with hypertension and diabetes. KEEP screenings are offered throughout the year but will be provided in at least 50 cities across the country on or around World Kidney Day, March 11.
- The National High Blood Pressure Education Program (NHBPEP) has succeeded in improving hypertension control and reducing death and disability from heart disease and stroke.

- Sonal Patil
(Symbiosis Institute of Health Sciences)