

Huge gaps in hypertension management

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A Simon Fraser University researcher studying hypertension rates in the U.S., Canada and England says each country needs to do more to prevent the condition, which is the leading risk factor for stroke and heart disease.

"These data show that thousands of deaths could be prevented each year by improving blood pressure in Canada and other countries," says SFU Health Sciences professor Michel Joffres, the paper's lead author.

"Hypertension is the number-one risk factor for mortality in the world, and small improvements in hypertension show important benefits in mortality, morbidity, quality of life, and [health expenditures](#)."

And according to the study, published in the *BMJ Open* journal, data from the three countries shows blood pressure was higher in all age-gender groups in England.

While the British have shown improvement since the last survey, they still have a long way to go. Joffres suspects the reason for the higher rates of hypertension is the combination of a high-sodium diet, [physical inactivity](#), and a lower level of treatment and control of individuals with high-blood pressure.

In comparison, if England's [mortality rates](#) of stroke and heart attacks were decreased to match Canada's levels – and mostly due to high-blood pressure differences – about 40,000 deaths would be prevented annually.

However, Joffres says it's important to note that England's hypertension guidelines are not as stringent as Canada's.

"The remarkable improvement we have seen in Canada since the 1990s is probably due in great part to the awareness we created with our last study, and an excellent program in Canada that followed and has created greater awareness in the physicians' community," he says.

The study shows thousands of deaths could be prevented each year by improving the blood pressure of populations in Canada, the U.S. and England.

"I hope our findings will show the gaps in [hypertension](#) management in all these countries, mainly in England, and hope that England will revise their guidelines to be more aggressive in terms of prevention and treatment," Joffres says.

More information: bmjopen.bmj.com/content/3/8/e003423.abstract

Provided by Simon Fraser University

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