

High blood pressure ER visits jumped 25 percent in 2006-11

9 September 2014

The number of people going to the emergency room for essential hypertension, high blood pressure with no known cause, increased by 25 percent in recent years, according to a study presented at the American Heart Association's High Blood Pressure Research Scientific Sessions 2014.

"This shows we are not doing a good job in controlling [high blood pressure](#) in the outpatient setting," said Sourabh Aggarwal, M.D., the study's lead researcher and Chief Resident in the Department of Internal Medicine at Western Michigan University School of Medicine in Kalamazoo. "We need better high blood pressure care in this setting." Researchers collected data on about 3.9 million [emergency room visits](#) in 2006-11 in which high blood pressure was the first listed diagnosis. They found:

- ER visits for essential hypertension increased by 25 percent, while the admission percentage for these patients fell by 15 percent.
- ER visits for hypertension with complication and secondary [hypertension](#) increased by 19 percent, while the admission percentage for these patients fell by 12 percent.
- Among admitted patients, the percentage of those who died in the hospital fell 36 percent.

"The decrease in admissions and deaths may be due to emergency room and hospital physicians becoming more skilled at treating high blood pressure," Aggarwal said. "But there is still a large unmet need for patients to have better help controlling their blood pressure in the outpatient setting."

High blood pressure, often called a silent killer because it typically has no symptoms, impacts 76.4 million U.S. adults. It's a major risk factor for stroke, heart attack and heart failure.

The researchers didn't track what brought people to the hospital, but the American Heart Association recommends going to the ER if someone finds that his or her blood pressure is above 180/110 mm Hg, which is considered a hypertensive crisis.

Further studies are needed to determine whether factors such as gender or other medical conditions affect the rate of [emergency room visits](#) for high [blood pressure](#).

Provided by American Heart Association

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