

DIFFICULTIES IN TREATING HYPERTENSION: BANGLADESH PERSPECTIVE

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Hypertension is the most important risk factor related to cardiovascular morbidity and mortality. Global burden of cardiovascular morbidity and mortality is increasing alarmingly day by day. More than a quarter of the world adult population is already hypertensive and this number is projected to increase to 29%, 1.56 billion, by 2025. Almost three-quarters of the world's population with hypertension will be in the developing countries, which are fuelled by rapid urbanization, lifestyle changes and unhealthy dietary habits. The incidence of hypertension is rising in both ageing and obese populations worldwide. Despite massive and costly efforts to identify and treat high blood pressure its control remains inadequate and difficult worldwide. Bangladesh is not an exception of that.

The prevalence of hypertension in Bangladesh is gradually increasing over the past half century. So far the history of prevalence studies in our country it is found that the rate differs from study settings and design but there was steady increase trend. The latest nationwide survey showed the prevalence of hypertension was 17.9% in 2010. The estimated population projection showed that 12 million Bangladeshi above the age of 25 were hypertensive.

The treatment and control of hypertension is a very difficult task worldwide and so much so in Bangladesh. If we see the data from the National Health and Nutrition Examination

Surveys (NHANES) it is evident that the treatment and control is very difficult and inadequate even in the USA. We do not have series of surveys like NHANES in our country but in a nationwide survey in Bangladesh in 2010 it is found that in self reported hypertensive 52.3% were treated with antihypertensive drugs and only 17% were controlled.

The difficulties in treating Bangladeshi hypertensive patients are found in different studies. Non compliance to treatment by patients is the important factor in treating the patients. In a study published in 2009 it was found that 85% of the patients are noncompliant at any time during their treatment. The factors responsible for the noncompliance were lack of awareness about HTN due to low educational level, asymptomatic nature of the disease, financial constraints, wrong beliefs and perceptions regarding hypertension. The other factors for noncompliance are difficult to be compliant with the lifestyle modification advices, reaching to the goal, diagnosis of hypertension and factors related to the physicians

How to overcome these difficulties? It is a great question worldwide and in Bangladesh also. Effective therapy

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prescribed by the most careful clinician will control hypertension only if the patient is motivated to take the medication. Motivation improves when patients have positive attitude and trust in their clinicians. At the same time better communication and empathetic approach on the part of a clinician can build the trust which will in turn help motivating patients. Patient education is very crucial in overcoming the noncompliance by the patients. Patients' understanding and the acceptance of the diagnosis of hypertension must be assessed. Patient's concerns, beliefs and misunderstandings must be discussed and resolved. Patients must be informed about recommended treatment and the role of lifestyle including diet, physical activity, quitting smoking and moderation of alcohol intake. So patients' counseling regarding the asymptomatic nature of the disease, long term benefit of treatment with emphasizing on need to continue treatment for lifelong are the mainstay in overcoming the difficulties in the treatment.

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