

Prevalence and therapeutic control of hypertension in French Caribbean regions

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Objective To describe characteristics of hypertension in French Caribbean regions.

Design A cross-sectional worksite study.

Setting and participants A random sample of 6136 workers referred for annual check-up from Martinique, French Guyana and Guadeloupe. An average of three consecutive measurements was taken as the blood pressure (BP) level. An additional visit was required in subjects not taking antihypertensive medications with an average BP over 140/90 mmHg.

Interventions None.

Main outcome measures Hypertension prevalence, awareness, treatment and control.

Results The age-specific prevalence of hypertension, based on two visits, increased from 3.2% in men below 30 years to 46.9% in those older than 50 years. The corresponding values found in women were 1.8% and 42.6%. The overall prevalence was 19.5% in men and 18.9% in women. The rate of awareness remained low while age increased. The use of antihypertensive medications slowly increased with age, but overall the rate remained lower in men compared with women. Up to 71% of hypertensive women received antihypertensive medications. Compared with previous studies, a high proportion of adequately

treated patients was found among women (44.9%). Only 30.4% of hypertensive men were treated, and as a result the control rate was lower (13.3%).

Conclusion Major sex-related differences are found in the control of high BP, with an unexpected high rate observed among Caribbean women. Better awareness and higher treatment rates play an important role in explaining such results. This may be important, especially in developing countries, where poor control of hypertension is a major cause of cardiovascular diseases. *J Hypertens* 00:000–000
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Introduction

Previous studies have reported a high prevalence of hypertension and a great severity of its target organ damage in Afro-Caribbean populations [1–4]. As an example, the incidence of stroke in Martinique, a Caribbean Island, is 1.5 to twofold higher than in European countries [4], and is as high as in black populations in the United States [5]. The comparison is particularly interesting because both populations originate from the west coast of Africa and share common ancestry [6]. Moreover, the westernization of the way of life that occurs in developing countries such as the Caribbean, paced by economy transition, is accompanied by an epidemic of hypertension, diabetes, and eventually cardiovascular diseases [7,8]. For these countries, global strategies to control blood pressure (BP)

through prevention programmes and through easing access to healthcare may offer a way to reduce cardiovascular diseases. As French Caribbean regions have been provided for years with a large access to healthcare systems, they offer an opportunity to assess to what extent BP control can be achieved in this setting. Therefore, a large cohort survey, the Incidence de l'Hypertension Arterielle dans la Population Active Antillo-Guyanaise (INHAPAG) study, was conducted in the French Caribbean regions in order to assess the epidemiological characteristics of hypertension. This paper presents a cross-sectional analysis of the cohort.

Methods

Study population

The present study was conducted in Martinique, Guadeloupe and French Guyana, three French Caribbean

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