Research Article

Trends in Prevalence, Awareness, Treatment, and Control of Hypertension in Rural Northeast China: 2008 to 2018

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Received 3 January 2020; Revised 9 May 2020; Accepted 12 May 2020; Published 28 June 2020

Academic Editor: Prescott B. Chase

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Objective. This study is aimed at exploring the trends in the prevalence, awareness, treatment, and control of hypertension in rural northeast China from 2008 to 2018.

Methods. Two successive cross-sectional surveys were conducted in Liaoning rural areas in 2008 and 2018, which included 131520 and 10926 representative participants aged ≥ 40 years, respectively.

Results. Overall, the age-standardized prevalence of hypertension increased from 44.7% to 53.6%, and male residents showed a faster pace of increase and a 2.1-fold increase than female residents (25.5% vs. 10.6%) from 2008 to 2018. Moreover, the mean systolic and diastolic blood pressures increased by 9.0% and 4.1%, respectively, and the increase rates were greater in men than in women (9.2% vs. 8.9% and 5.3% vs. 3.5%, P < 0.05). Additionally, the prevalence of stage 2 and above hypertension was significantly higher in men than in women. However, the awareness, treatment, and control rates showed no improvement and remained unacceptably low. Control rates were 3.7% in 2008 and 3.6% in 2018. Even among individuals who received medical treatment, only 8.7% and 10.1% had controlled hypertension in 2008 and 2018, respectively.

Conclusions. The prevalence of hypertension and mean blood pressure increased steadily in the past 10 years in rural northeast China, especially in men. However, the awareness, treatment, and control rates of hypertension remained extremely low. Therefore, long-term comprehensive strategies are urgently needed to prevent further development of cardiovascular diseases in these areas.

1. Introduction

Hypertension has long been considered as a major public health problem [1]. As a leading modifiable risk factor of various cardiovascular diseases, it accounts for nearly 54% of stroke and 47% of coronary artery disease [2]. A previous study reported that the number of individuals with hypertension was projected to be nearly 1.56 billion by 2025 worldwide, and approximately 3/4 of them will be in developing countries [3]. The economic burden of hypertension was estimated to cost approximately US $370 billion and 10% of healthcare expenditures worldwide [4]. Therefore, strategies targeted on hypertension management could provide underestimated public health gains.

The status of hypertension varies widely with different geographic, demographic, and socioeconomic factors. The prevalence of hypertension is significantly high in northeast China compared to those in other regions [5]. Moreover, more than half of the Chinese population is composed of rural residents. These populations possibly remain unaware,
and hypertension remains untreated and uncontrolled despite the high prevalence [6]. Furthermore, rural China has been experiencing rapid epidemiologic transitions and economic progress in the past 10 years [7], so the status and distribution of hypertension might change accordingly. However, long-term estimates of the trends in hypertension remain scarce even though the prevalence of hypertension in different regions of China has been widely reported [8, 9]. An accurate estimation of the long-term trends of this condition is crucial in proposing effective strategies and programs regarding the prevention and control of hypertension, as well as planning the rational use of limited healthcare resources in rural China. In the present study, we conducted a cross-sectional survey of two large representative rural populations in 2008 and 2018, aiming to identify long-term natural changes in the prevalence, treatment, and control of hypertension in rural northeast China and further provide population-based evidence for formulating corresponding strategies.

2. Methods

2.1. Study Population. This consisted of two cross-sectional studies conducted in northeast rural China in 2008 and 2018. A multistage, stratified, and cluster random sampling method was used to ensure that the samples of the two studies were representative. Further details on the design are described as follows.

2.2. Cross-Sectional Study in 2008. The study was conducted from September 2008 to November 2008. Six counties/cities (Zhuanghe city, Benxi county, Fumeng county, Jianping county, Xifeng county, and Dawa county) were selected from Liaoning Province. Subsequently, 70% of the township and 50% of the villages were randomly selected. Thereafter, 626 rural villages in 96 townships were randomly selected from these 6 counties/cities. All permanent residents aged ≥ 40 years in each village (n = 149882), except those who were pregnant or had a mental disorder, were eligible to participate; 131520 participants (87.75%) completed the study (Figure 1). The study was approved by the Central Ethics Committee of the Liaoning Provincial Center for Disease Control and Prevention. Written informed consent was obtained from all participants.

2.3. Cross-Sectional Study in 2018. The study was conducted between September 2017 and May 2018. Four counties (Chaoyang, Lingyuan, Liaoyang, and Donggang) were randomly selected from Liaoning Province. Subsequently, 19 rural villages were randomly selected from these 4 counties. All permanent residents aged ≥ 40 years in each village (n = 12808), except those who were pregnant or had a...
The age-standardized prevalence was 44.7% to 53.6% for men and 42.7% to 55.1% for women. The crude prevalence of hypertension was 44.3% in 2008 and 60.6% in 2018. Noticeably, the prevalence of hypertension showed a significant decrease in the past 10 years, especially in women. The highest age-specific prevalence of hypertension was observed in those aged 50–59 years in 2008; however, it changed into 60–69 years in 2018.

The age-standardized prevalence was 44.7% to 53.6% from 2008 to 2018, which increased by 16.5% during this period. Further, male residents showed a faster pace of increase than female residents, from 42.7% to 55.1% compared to 46.7% to 53.3%, respectively. The prevalence of hypertension in men showed a more rapid increase than that in women (42.7% vs. 14.1%, P < 0.05) in 10 years.

The percentages of normal condition and prehypertension increased from 46.7% to 53.3%, respectively. The prevalence of hypertension in men increased significantly from 2008 to 2018, with rates of 44.3% and 19.0%, respectively.

3. Results

3.1. Prevalence of Hypertension. In 2008, the sample included 131,520 individuals with a mean age of 54.1 years (SD, 9.7), of which 64,430 (48.9%) were men. On the contrary, in 2018, 109,260 participants accomplished the study, with 43,900 men (40.2%) and an average age of 60.0 years (SD, 9.7). Table 1 shows the prevalence of hypertension in the past 10 years. There was a noticeable increase in the prevalence of hypertension during this period. The crude prevalence of hypertension was 44.3% in 2008 and 60.6% in 2018. Noticeably, the prevalence of hypertension was lower in men than in women in 2008. However, it did not differ significantly between men and women in 2018 due to the steeper increase in the prevalence of hypertension in men. The highest age-specific prevalence of hypertension was observed in those aged 50–59 years in 2008; however, it changed into 60–69 years in 2018.

The age-standardized prevalence was 44.7% to 53.6% from 2008 to 2018, which increased by 16.5% during this period. Further, male residents showed a faster pace of increase than female residents, from 42.7% to 55.1% compared to 46.7% to 53.3%, respectively. The prevalence of hypertension in men increased significantly from 2008 to 2018, with rates of 44.3% and 19.0%, respectively.

3.2. Blood Pressure. The trends of blood pressure in the overall population were demonstrated in Table 3. From 2008 to
ally, SBP showed a gradual increase with increasing age in a rate of 4.1% (5.3% in men and 3.5% in women). Addition-

mean DBP increased from 83.3 mmHg to 86.7 mmHg, with 9.0% (9.2% in men and 8.9% in women). Meanwhile, the both SBP and DBP. The mean SBP increased from 133.6 mmHg in 2008 to 145.7 mmHg in 2018, with a rate of 9.0% (9.2% in men and 8.9% in women). Meanwhile, the mean DBP increased from 83.3 mmHg to 86.7 mmHg, with a rate of 4.1% (5.3% in men and 3.5% in women). Additionally, SBP showed a gradual increase with increasing age in both 2008 and 2018; however, DBP did not show a significant change across all ages. In the population with hypertension, the SBP increased by 5.2% although DBP did not show a sig-

ificant change.

3.3. Awareness, Treatment, and Control Rate of Hypertension. Overall, the awareness, treatment, and control rates of

| Age groups (years) | Men 2008 | 2018 Change (%) | Women 2008 | 2018 Change (%) | Total 2008 | 2018 Change (%) | P for men | P for women | P for total |
|-------------------|----------|-----------------|------------|-----------------|------------|-----------------|----------|------------|------------|
| Normal            |          |                 |            |                 |            |                 |          |            |            |
| 40-49             | 18.5     | -23.1           | 37.6       | -37.1           | -1.2       | 44.9            | 38.3     | -14.6      | 0.001      | 0.745      | 0.001      |
| 50-59             | 24.1     | -21.7           | 23.3       | -27.2           | 16.6       | 23.7            | 28.0     | 18.1       | <0.001     | <0.001     | <0.001     |
| 60-69             | 27.8     | -31.5           | 26.4       | -31.6           | 19.5       | 27.1            | 31.5     | 16.2       | 0.002      | 0.001      | <0.001     |
| 70-79             | 30.8     | -34.9           | 27.1       | -28.2           | 4.4        | 29.0            | 31.3     | 7.9        | 0.024      | 0.468      | 0.059      |
| ≥80               | 31.5     | -34.0           | 25.3       | -27.2           | 7.2        | 28.4            | 30.3     | 6.5        | 0.564      | 0.634      | 0.528      |
| Total             | 23.5     | -31.0           | 21.7       | -27.9           | 28.6       | 22.6            | 29.2     | 29.2       | <0.001     | <0.001     | <0.001     |
| ASR               | 23.3     | -29.7           | 21.7       | -26.2           | 20.7       | 22.5            | 27.5     | 22.2       |            |            |            |
| Stage 2           |          |                 |            |                 |            |                 |          |            |            |
| 40-49             | 6.2      | -12.2           | 95.6       | -8.2            | 4.2        | 7.1             | 9.6      | 35.5       | <0.001     | 0.673      | <0.001     |
| 50-59             | 11.6     | -16.2           | 14.3       | -16.9           | 17.9       | 13.0            | 16.6     | 27.7       | <0.001     | 0.002      | <0.001     |
| 60-69             | 16.9     | -21.6           | 20.6       | -21.9           | 6.3        | 18.7            | 21.7     | 16.1       | <0.001     | 0.17       | <0.001     |
| 70-79             | 21.5     | -25.5           | 24.4       | -29.4           | 20.2       | 22.9            | 27.6     | 20.5       | 0.012      | 0.002      | <0.001     |
| ≥80               | 19.7     | -22.9           | 16.1       | -27.9           | 5.8        | 23.8            | 26.5     | 11.5       | 0.401      | 0.681      | 0.319      |
| Total             | 11.6     | -19.4           | 13.9       | -18.9           | 36.0       | 12.8            | 19.1     | 49.2       | <0.001     | <0.001     | <0.001     |
| ASR               | 11.5     | -16.6           | 14.5       | -16.1           | 11.0       | 13.0            | 16.1     | 23.8       |            |            |            |
| Stage 3           |          |                 |            |                 |            |                 |          |            |            |
| 40-49             | 3.3      | 5.0             | 52.3       | 4.0             | 3.6        | 3.6             | 4.1      | 12.3       | 0.015      | 0.515      | 0.31       |
| 50-59             | 6.1      | 6.3             | 3.8        | 8.6             | 7.4        | 7.4             | 7.0      | -5.3       | 0.744      | 0.062      | 0.41       |
| 60-69             | 8.7      | 9.5             | 9.0        | 12.7            | 8.7        | 10.7            | 12.0     | 12.1       | 0.297      | 0.153      | 0.017      |
| 70-79             | 12.3     | 15.4            | 24.8       | 17.7            | 9.0        | 14.9            | 17.5     | 17.5       | 0.019      | 0.256      | 0.007      |
| ≥80               | 15.7     | 16.0            | 1.4        | 20.9            | 23.1       | 10.7            | 18.3     | 19.9       | 8.6        | 0.948      | 0.536      | 0.527      |
| Total             | 6.2      | 9.2             | 48.4       | 8.4             | 10.8       | 28.6            | 7.3      | 10.2       | 39.7       | <0.001     | <0.001     | <0.001     |
| ASR               | 6.3      | 7.5             | 19.0       | 8.9             | 8.9        | 0.0             | 7.6      | 8.2        | 7.9        |            |            |            |
The prevalence of hypertension in rural northeast China was higher than the average national level conducted in the same population [17]. On the contrary, our study represented a more accurate estimation of natural changes during this period in rural northeast China. Liaoning Province has an overall population of 43.78 million, a major proportion of the residents are living in rural areas, and hypertension is a great population burden and major public health challenge in these areas. Therefore, comprehensive strategies focusing on the prevention and treatment of hypertension in these areas should be emphasized.

The SBP showed a noticeable increase in the past 10 years in both overall population and those with hypertension, suggesting that the situation has markedly worsened over several years. As rural China has been experiencing rapid socioeconomic changes and health transitions [18, 19], the uncontrolled related risk factors including age, male sex, diabetes, obesity, dyslipidemia, hyperuricemia, and lifestyle change might largely contribute to the increasing burden of hypertension, although great efforts have been made to address the cause of hypertension and implement appropriate treatment. Moreover, it was not surprising that the prevalence of hypertension in male residents had a faster pace of increase. Male residents were likely to have multiple risk factors including smoking and drinking in rural areas [20]. Moreover, the age-specific prevalence was different from

### Table 3: Level of SBP and DBP (mmHg) in adults of rural northeast China by age and sex between 2008-2018.

| Age group (years) | 2008 | 2018 | Change (%) | 2008 | 2018 | Change (%) | 2008 | 2018 | Change (%) | P for men | P for women | P for total |
|------------------|------|------|------------|------|------|------------|------|------|------------|----------|------------|-----------|
| SBP in adults    |      |      |            |      |      |            |      |      |            |         |            |           |
| 40-49            | 127.1| 134.6| 5.9        | 125.2| 130.3| 4.1        | 126.1| 131.8| 4.5        | <0.001   | <0.001     | <0.001    |
| 50-59            | 133.1| 140.9| 5.8        | 134.9| 142.1| 5.3        | 134.0| 141.6| 5.7        | <0.001   | <0.001     | <0.001    |
| 60-69            | 139.0| 147.9| 6.4        | 143.1| 151.8| 6.1        | 141.0| 150.1| 6.4        | <0.001   | <0.001     | <0.001    |
| 70-79            | 144.8| 155.3| 7.2        | 149.5| 158.8| 6.2        | 147.0| 157.2| 6.9        | <0.001   | <0.001     | <0.001    |
| ≥80              | 146.9| 154.5| 5.2        | 152.5| 162.0| 6.2        | 149.7| 158.6| 6.0        | 0.001    | <0.001     | <0.001    |
| Total            | 133.2| 145.4| 9.2        | 134.0| 145.9| 8.9        | 133.6| 145.7| 9.1        | <0.001   | <0.001     | <0.001    |
| DBP in adults    |      |      |            |      |      |            |      |      |            |         |            |           |
| 40-49            | 81.2 | 88.0 | 8.4        | 79.6 | 83.7 | 5.1        | 80.3 | 85.2 | 6.0        | <0.001   | <0.001     | <0.001    |
| 50-59            | 84.1 | 88.9 | 5.8        | 83.9 | 86.4 | 3.0        | 84.0 | 87.3 | 4.0        | <0.001   | <0.001     | <0.001    |
| 60-69            | 85.4 | 87.6 | 2.6        | 86.1 | 86.6 | 0.6        | 85.8 | 87.0 | 1.5        | <0.001   | 0.137      | <0.001    |
| 70-79            | 86.6 | 87.2 | 0.7        | 87.1 | 85.3 | -2.1       | 86.9 | 86.2 | -0.8       | 0.265    | <0.001     | 0.065     |
| ≥80              | 86.4 | 86.4 | 0.0        | 88.1 | 88.1 | -0.1       | 87.3 | 87.3 | 0.1        | 0.977    | 0.971      | 0.96      |
| Total            | 83.5 | 87.9 | 5.3        | 83.0 | 85.9 | 3.5        | 83.3 | 86.7 | 4.1        | <0.001   | <0.001     | <0.001    |
The highest age-specific prevalence of hypertension was observed in those aged 50–59 years in 2008; however, it changed into 60–69 years in 2018. Longer life expectancy likely attributed to the change.

In addition to the increased prevalence, our study identified that the overall awareness, treatment, and control rates of hypertension remained less than 50%, 40%, and 7%, respectively, in the last decade. Compared to those in economically developed countries, they were far from satisfactory [4, 21, 22]. Moreover, the treatment and control rates of hypertension were still remarkably below the national average levels and those in other developing countries [8, 23, 24]. The persistent frustrating awareness, treatment, and control rates of hypertension suggested that aggressive education and screening were urgently required in these areas. Moreover, provision of adequate treatment and affordable medications provided by protocols and policies might be of great importance.

The disappointing awareness, treatment, and control rates indicated that a considerably large number of individuals with uncontrolled hypertension largely contributed to the high prevalence of stroke in northeast China, which elicited a major concern in these areas [6, 20]. Individuals with stage 2 and 3 hypertension were more likely to be aware of, treated for, and controlled for hypertension, although there were still a large proportion of this population who had uncontrolled hypertension [8, 25]. It was possible that individuals with low income and without prior cardiovascular events and/or coexisting conditions were less likely to seek medical attention [8]. Therefore, available and affordable therapies in addition to persistent education and long-term screening in the rural Chinese population were reasonably expected.

The strength of this study is that the surveys were conducted in two representative rural populations and were adequately powered, thus providing opportunity to assess the long-term natural changes of hypertension in rural northeast China. There are still several limitations in the study. First, the current hypertension guideline defined stage 1 hypertension as SBP of 130–139 mmHg or DBP of 80–89 mmHg [26]. However, in the present study, hypertension was defined according to the previous guideline, since the current

| Age groups (years) | Men 2008 | Men 2018 | Change (%) | Women 2008 | Women 2018 | Change (%) | Total 2008 | Total 2018 | Change (%) | P value for men | P value for women | P value for total |
|--------------------|----------|----------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------|
| 40-49              | 38.6     | 36.5     | -5.4       | 49.5       | 40.6       | -17.8      | 44.3       | 39.0       | -12.0      | 0.468          | <0.001         | 0.005           |
| 50-59              | 48.7     | 40.0     | -17.9      | 59.6       | 48.6       | -18.4      | 54.6       | 45.4       | -16.9      | <0.001         | <0.001         | <0.001          |
| 60-69              | 55.2     | 42.7     | -22.7      | 64.5       | 52.6       | -18.5      | 60.1       | 48.6       | -19.1      | <0.001         | <0.001         | <0.001          |
| 70-79              | 56.6     | 43.6     | -23.0      | 64.0       | 59.9       | -6.4       | 60.2       | 52.5       | -12.8      | <0.001         | 0.039          | <0.001          |
| ≥80                | 52.5     | 37.4     | -28.8      | 59.0       | 60.8       | 3.2        | 55.8       | 50.8       | -9.0       | 0.006          | 0.698          | 0.166           |
| Total              | 48.9     | 41.3     | -15.6      | 58.9       | 51.7       | -12.1      | 54.2       | 47.5       | -12.3      | <0.001         | <0.001         | <0.001          |

2008 to 2018. The highest age-specific prevalence of hypertension was observed in those aged 50–59 years in 2008; however, it changed into 60–69 years in 2018. Longer life expectancy likely attributed to the change.

In addition to the increased prevalence, our study identified that the overall awareness, treatment, and control rates of hypertension remained less than 50%, 40%, and 7%, respectively, in the last decade. Compared to those in economically developed countries, they were far from satisfactory [4, 21, 22]. Moreover, the treatment and control rates of hypertension were still remarkably below the national average levels and those in other developing countries [8, 23, 24]. The persistent frustrating awareness, treatment, and control rates of hypertension suggested that aggressive education and screening were urgently required in these areas. Moreover, provision of adequate treatment and affordable medications provided by protocols and policies might be of great importance.

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The strength of this study is that the surveys were conducted in two representative rural populations and were adequately powered, thus providing opportunity to assess the long-term natural changes of hypertension in rural northeast China. There are still several limitations in the study. First, the current hypertension guideline defined stage 1 hypertension as SBP of 130–139 mmHg or DBP of 80–89 mmHg [26]. However, in the present study, hypertension was defined according to the previous guideline, since the current
Chinese guidelines for the management of hypertension recommended a blood pressure treatment goal of 140/90 mmHg [16, 27]. Second, we did not obtain information regarding the risk factors of hypertension, including obesity, diabetes, dyslipidemia, and lifestyle change, since it was well established recently [28, 29].

5. Conclusion

We provided the long-term natural evolution of the prevalence, awareness, treatment, and control of hypertension by conducting two cross-sectional studies in different representative samples. A comprehensive assessment of these changes was essential in exploring effective strategies in northeast rural China. The prevalence of hypertension dramatically increased in the past 10 years. The increasing number of individuals with hypertension and increased blood pressure has become a serious public problem in these areas, especially in men. Moreover, the awareness, treatment, and control rates were frustratingly low in each period, even among individuals with stage 2 and above hypertension. Inadequate management of the population with hypertension might have substantial economical and health consequences, including the development of cerebrovascular, kidney, and heart diseases. Therefore, our study highlighted the urgent need to develop comprehensive strategies for adequate management of hypertension in rural northeast China.

Data Availability

The data used to support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon request.

Ethical Approval

The study in 2008 and 2018 was granted approval by Central Ethics Committee at the Liaoning Provincial Center for Disease Control and Prevention and China National Center for Cardiovascular Disease, respectively.

Consent

Written informed consent was obtained from all participants.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declared they have no competing interests.

Authors’ Contributions

GP and LX were responsible for the concept and design of the study. LX, SL, LJ, and YT contributed to the drafting of the manuscript. LJ, SL, YT, ML, ZD, DD, and LS collected and analyzed the data. LX, LS, and RZ interpreted the data. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

Acknowledgments

We would like to thank CDC of Dawa, Chaoyang, Liaoyang, Dandong, Donggang, Zhuanghe, Benxi, Fumeng, Jianping, and Xifeng city or county in Liaoning Province who work hard to ensure the reliability and accuracy of data. This study was supported by the Department of Science and Technology of Liaoning Province (2018225065 and 2019JH2/10300001).

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