Hypertension is a major cardiovascular risk factor with long-term effect on left ventricular structure and function. Left ventricular hypertrophy (LVH) diagnosed either by electrocardiography or imaging modalities is an independent predictor of cardiovascular events and mortality over and beyond other established risk factors. Left ventricular mass increases with blood pressure (BP) in both Blacks and Whites, but more steeply in Blacks than in Whites.

### BACKGROUND
The association of electrocardiographic left ventricular hypertrophy (ECG-LVH) with blood pressure (BP) in Blacks living in sub-Saharan Africa remains poorly documented.

### METHODS
In 225 Black Nigerians and 729 White Flemish, we analyzed QRS voltages and voltage-duration products and 12 criteria diagnostic of ECG-LVH in relation to office BP (mean of 5 consecutive readings) and home BP (duplicate morning and evening readings averaged over 1 week).

### RESULTS
In multivariable analyses, QRS voltage and voltage-duration indexes were generally higher in Blacks than Whites. By using any of 12 criteria, ECG-LVH was more prevalent among Black than White men (54.4% vs. 36.0%) with no ethnic difference among women (17.1%). Precordial voltages and voltage-duration products increased with office and home systolic BP (SBP), and increases were up to 3-fold steeper in Blacks. In Blacks vs. Whites, increases in the Sokolow–Lyon voltage associated with a 10-mm Hg higher SBP were 0.18 mV (95% confidence interval [CI], 0.09–0.26) vs. 0.06 mV (0.02–0.09) and 0.17 mV (0.07–0.28) vs. 0.11 mV (CI, 0.07–0.15) for office and home BP, respectively, with a significant ethnic gradient (P < 0.05). The risk of ECG-LVH increased more with office and home BP in Blacks than Whites.

### CONCLUSIONS
Associations of ECG voltages and voltage-duration products and risk of ECG-LVH with BP are steeper in Black Nigerians compared with a White reference population. In resource-poor settings of sub-Saharan Africa, the ECG in combination with office and home BP is an essential instrument in risk stratification across the entire BP range.

**Keywords:** blood pressure; electrocardiography; ethnicity; home blood pressure; hypertension; left ventricular hypertrophy; population science; risk stratification; special populations.

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However, the Blacks included in previous studies were Americans of African ancestry. None of these studies assessed the association of electrocardiographic traits with the self-measured home BP. In addition, most of the previous studies assessed LVH using echocardiography or electrocardiography calibrated against echocardiography. Although echocardiography and other cardiac imaging modalities give a more accurate estimate of the anatomical left ventricular mass than electrocardiography, the latter technique provides unique information on electrical properties of the pathologically changed myocardium. In addition, an electrocardiogram is easy to acquire and is cost effective when compared to imaging approaches. As such it is an attractive method of assessing LVH that will ensure wide clinical applicability of research findings in resource-poor settings characteristic of many regions in sub-Saharan Africa. Therefore, we assessed ethnic differences in the associations of QRS voltages and voltage-duration products and of electrocardiographic LVH as diagnosed by published criteria with office and home BPs in a group of Blacks Nigerians and a reference population-based cohort of White Flemish.

METHODS

Study population

The Nigerian and Flemish population studies complied with the Helsinki Declaration for investigation of human subjects. They received ethical approval from the University of Abuja Teaching Hospital Health Research Ethics Committee and the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Leuven. All participants provided informed written consent.

Nigerian population study. The Black Nigerian population consisted of participants recruited in the framework of the ongoing Nigerian Population Research on Environment, Gene and Health (NIPREGH) which commenced in April 2013. Eligible adults were living in a well-delineated housing estate in Abuja. They were invited to a local examination center for a physical examination and electrocardiography. The participation rate was 79%. A high-quality electrocardiogram could not be obtained in 137 of the 362 participants because of frequent and unpredictable power failures in the catchment area and the poor grounding of the electrical wiring in the examination center. We excluded another 32 individuals because less than 2 home BP measurements were available. Thus, the number of Nigerians analyzed totaled 225. They had no history of heart disease (Figure 1).

Flemish Population Study. The White Flemish had been enrolled in the Flemish Study on Environment, Genes and Health Outcomes (FLEMENGHO). Recruitment started in 1985 and continued until 2004. The initial participation rate was 78%. The participants were repeatedly followed-up. Self-measurement of BP at home started in September 2012. Since then, 1,446 former participants were invited for a follow-up examination at a local examination center. However, 97 were unavailable, because they had been institutionalized or were too ill (n = 53), or had moved out-of-the area or did not respond (n = 44). Of the remaining 1,349 former participants, 855 renewed informed consent (63%). We excluded 126 participants from analysis, because the electrocardiogram was either missing or of insufficient quality (n = 3), because less than 2 self-recorded BP measurements were available (n = 95), because they were pacemaker-dependent (n = 11), had a history of myocardial infarction (11), cardiomyopathy (2), LBBB, right bundle branch block (RBBB) (2), and had a history of myocardial infarction (11), cardiomyopathy (2), LBBB, right bundle branch block (RBBB) (2), and had a history of myocardial infarction (11), cardiomyopathy (2), LBBB, right bundle branch block (RBBB) (2), and had a history of myocardial infarction (11), cardiomyopathy (2), LBBB, right bundle branch block (RBBB) (2), and had a history of myocardial infarction (11), cardiomyopathy (2), LBBB, right bundle branch block (RBBB)
infarction (n = 11), cardiomyopathy (n = 2), or because their electrocardiogram showed left or right bundle branch block (n = 4). Thus, the number of White participants statistically analyzed totaled 729 (Figure 1).

Electrocardiography

Standard 12-lead electrocardiograms were recorded at a speed of 25 mm/sec with the calibration set at 1 mV/cm. To improve the quality of the electrocardiograms, research assistants received periodical training on skin preparation, electrode placement and positioning of the subjects. Certified cardiologists checked the electrocardiograms. The Cardias device (RDSM Medical Devices, Hasselt, Belgium) was used in NIPREGH and the Schiller-AT2 device (Schiller Medizintechnik GmbH, Feldkirchen bei München, Germany) in FLEMENGHO. These devices are equipped with software that automatically measures the amplitudes and the duration of the waves in each of the 12 leads. All measurements were exported into Excel and imported in SAS. Low-frequency noise emanating from movement, baseline wander, and respiration and high frequency noise emanating from power-line or radiated electromagnetic influence were filtered before the final signal acquisition. In accordance with the recommendations of the American Heart Association, cutoff values were set at 0.05 Hz and 150 Hz for the low- and high-frequency filters, respectively. LVH was diagnosed using 12 published criteria (Table 1), based on voltages of the limb or precordial leads or their combination or on QRS voltage × duration products. These criteria were calculated from the exported voltages and durations using a standardized SAS program. Outliers were checked against the source data and the printed electrocardiograms.

Table 1. Electrocardiographic criteria for left ventricular hypertrophy

| Criterion (reference) | Definition | LVH threshold |
|-----------------------|------------|--------------|
| **Limb-lead voltages** | Lewis⁴ | (R in I − S in I) + (S in III − R in III) | >1.6 mV |
| Gubner–Ungerleider⁵ | R in I + S in III | >2.5 mV |
| Sokolow–Lyon⁶ | R in aVL | >1.1 mV |
| **Precordial lead voltages** | Sokolow-Lyon⁷ | S in V₁ + maximum of R in V₅, and R in V₆ | >3.5 mV |
| Wilson⁸ | R in V₅ | >3.3 mV |
| Romhilt⁹ | S in V₂ + maximum of R in V₅ or V₆ | >4.5 mV |
| **Combination of limb and precordial voltages** | Cornell in women¹⁰ | S in V₃ + R in aVL | >2.0 mV |
| | Cornell in men¹⁰ | S in V₃ + R in aVL | >2.8 mV |
| | Siegel total voltage¹¹ | Sum of greatest positive and negative QRS deflection in 12 leads | >17.5 mV |
| | Manning ≤30 years¹² | Sum of Q, R and S voltages in aVF, V₂, and V₆ | >5.9 mV |
| | Manning >30 years¹² | Sum of Q, R and S voltages in aVF, V₂, and V₆ | >9.3 mV |
| **Voltage × QRS duration products** | Sokolow–Lyon¹³ | Sokolow–Lyon index × QRS duration | >288.0 mV.ms |
| | Cornell (women)¹⁴ | (Cornell index + 0.8 mV) × QRS duration | >243.6 mV.ms |
| | Cornell (men)¹⁴ | Cornell index × QRS duration | >243.6 mV.ms |
| | Siegel¹⁵ | (Siegel total voltage) × QRS duration | >1747.2 mV.ms |

Abbreviation: LVH, left ventricular hypertrophy.
between 7 PM and 9 PM before going to sleep. At the end of the recording period, all BP readings were exported by the Omron software and imported into SAS. The home BP was the average of all self-measured readings.

**Other measurements**

The observers measured each participants’ anthropometric characteristics and administered a standard questionnaire to collect information about their medical history, smoking and drinking habits, and intake of medications. Skinfold thickness was the average of measurements obtained at 3 sites, i.e. the triceps, subscapular area, and suprailiac crest, by means of the Harpenden Skinfold Caliper (Bedfordshire, UK) providing a constant pressure of 0.01 kg per mm² (0.098 N/mm²) at all openings of the 90 mm² anvils. Body mass index was body weight in kilograms divided by height in meters squared. Diabetes mellitus was the use of antidiabetic drugs or a fasting or random plasma glucose equal to or exceeding 7.0 or 11.1 mmol/l.

**Statistical analysis**

For database management and statistical analysis, we used SAS software version 9.4. (SAS Institute, Cary, NC). We reported the central tendency and spread of the data as mean and SD. For comparison of means and proportions, we applied the large sample z-test and the χ² statistic, respectively. Statistical significance was a P value less than 0.05 on 2-sided tests. We standardized the prevalence of LVH by the direct method for sex and age (<45 vs. ≥45 years). We used multiple linear regression to adjust for confounders, while assessing the relation of the electrocardiographic variables as continuous variables with the office and home BP. Using multiple logistic regression models, we determined the odds ratio of having LVH associated with a 10 mm Hg higher office or home systolic BP (SBP). We tested heterogeneity among Blacks and Whites by introducing the appropriate interaction terms in the model.

**RESULTS**

**Characteristics of participants**

Table 2 lists the characteristics of the participants by sex and ethnicity. Compared to Whites, Blacks were younger (39.1 vs. 52.8 years; P < 0.0001) and had lower (P < 0.05) conventional (112/72 vs. 132/83 mm Hg) and home (116/75 vs. 122/76 mm Hg) SBP and diastolic BP. Compared to White men, Black men had lower (P < 0.0001) body mass index (25.1 vs. 27.4 kg/m²), waist-to-hip ratio (0.91 vs. 0.94), and skinfold thickness (1.4 vs. 2.1 mm). On the other hand, Black women had a higher waist-to-hip ratio (0.88 vs. 0.86; P = 0.048) but thinner skinfolds (1.9 vs. 2.6 mm) compared with White women. The prevalence of smoking (2% vs. 13%) and drinking alcohol (30% vs. 70%) and using BP lowering drugs was lower (P < 0.01) among Blacks than Whites.

**Electrocardiographic measurements according to ethnicity**

We assessed LVH according to 12 different criteria (Table 1), unadjusted and with adjustment for age, body mass index, skinfold thickness, and antihypertensive drug intake. Supplementary Table S1 (unadjusted) and Table 3 (adjusted) show the distribution of these measurements on a continuous scale broken down by sex and ethnicity. With adjustments applied, the limb-lead voltages (P < 0.001) and the Sokolow–Lyon index (P < 0.05) were higher in Black women and men compared with their White counterparts. On the contrary, the Siegel and Manning criteria based on a combination of limb and precordial voltages were lower (P < 0.05) in Black Nigerians compared to White Flemish. The ethnic differences in the voltage × duration products paralleled those in the corresponding voltage-only criteria.

The significant differences in the continuous electrocardiographic (ECG) criteria between Blacks and Whites were translated into a significantly higher (P < 0.05) prevalence of LVH in Black men when assessed by the Lewis and Sokolow–Lyon limb voltage criteria, the Sokolow–Lyon and Romhilt precordial voltage criteria, and the Sokolow–Lyon and Cornell voltage × duration products (Supplementary Table S2). Black as compared to White women had a lower (P < 0.05) prevalence of LVH when assessed by the Siegel total voltage sum, but a higher (P < 0.05) prevalence when categorized by the Sokolow–Lyon voltage-duration product. The prevalence of LVH defined using any of the 12 criteria was higher in Black as compared to White men (54.4% vs. 36.0%, P = 0.0006), but similar in Black and White women (18.9% vs. 16.5%, P = 0.57).

**Association between ECG criteria for LVH and office and home BP**

After adjustment for sex, age, body mass index, skinfold thickness, and antihypertensive drug intake, all ECG criteria based on precordial lead voltages (alone or in combination with limb-lead voltages) and the voltage-duration products were positively correlated (P < 0.01) with the office SBP in the 2 ethnicities. The slopes of these relations were significantly (P < 0.03) steeper in Blacks than in Whites (Table 4, Figure 2). In Blacks, a 10 mm Hg higher office SBP was associated with 0.18 mV (95% confidence interval [CI], 0.09–0.26; P < 0.0001) higher Sokolow–Lyon voltage, whereas in Whites this slope amounted to 0.06 mV per 10 mm Hg (CI, 0.02–0.09; P < 0.01). The ethnic difference was statistically significant (P < 0.001). Similarly, the increase in the Sokolow–Lyon voltage-product corresponding to a 10 mm Hg increase in the office SBP was 15.7 mV × ms (CI, 7.5–24.0; P < 0.0001) in Blacks and 6.0 (CI, 2.8–9.3; P < 0.0001) mV × ms in Whites (P for ethnic difference, 0.001). We observed the same trends for home SBP, although the ethnic differences did not reach statistical significance for the Wilson precordial voltage (P = 0.53) nor for the Sokolow–Lyon (P = 0.078) and Siegel (P = 0.32) voltage-duration products.

The limb-lead voltages were not consistently related to the office or home SBPs (Table 4). If anything, the relationship between the limb-lead voltage criteria as defined by Lewis
Hg higher home SBP was associated with an odds ratio of 2.27 (CI, 1.06–1.35; \( P < 0.0001)\) in Blacks, while in Whites the odds ratio was 1.20 (CI, 1.06–1.35; \( P = 0.0038)\). The \( P \) value for the ethnic difference was \(<0.0001)\). The same trends were observed for home SBP on office and home measurement in Black Nigerians and White Flemish recruited from the population with an objective to search for ethnic differences. The key findings can be summarized as follows: (i) most QRS voltage combinations and voltage-duration products tended to be higher in Blacks than in Whites, irrespective of sex, age, and other confounding variables; (ii) in both ethnicities, the precordial QRS voltage sums, combined or not with the limb voltages, and the voltage-duration products tended to be higher in Blacks than in Whites, irrespective of sex, age, and other confounding variables; (iii) the slope of these associations was up to 3 times steeper in Blacks than in Whites; (iv) and these results were confirmed when LVH was analyzed on a dichotomous rather than a continuous scale.

**DISCUSSION**

We assessed the association of various ECG measurements commonly applied for the diagnosis of LVH with SBP on office and home measurement in Black Nigerians and White Flemish recruited from the population with an objective to search for ethnic differences. The key findings can be summarized as follows: (i) most QRS voltage combinations and voltage-duration products tended to be higher in Blacks than in Whites, irrespective of sex, age, and other confounding variables; (ii) in both ethnicities, the precordial QRS voltage sums, combined or not with the limb voltages, and the voltage-duration products were positively associated with both office and home SBP; (iii) the slope of these associations was up to 3 times steeper in Blacks than in Whites; (iv) and these results were confirmed when LVH was analyzed on a dichotomous rather than a continuous scale.

**Table 2. Characteristics of participants by sex and ethnicity**

| Characteristics | Women | | Men |
|-----------------|-------|-------|-------|
| Number in category | Blacks | Whites | Blacks | Whites |
| Smoking | 111 | 376 | 114 | 353 |
| Number with characteristic (%) | | | | |
| Drinking alcohol | 0 (0.0) | 46 (12.2) | 3 (3.5) | \( \leq 49 (13.9) \) |
| Office hypertension | 25 (22.5) | 19 (58.2) | 43 (37.7) | 290 (82.2) |
| Home hypertension | 22 (19.8) | 156 (41.5) | 22 (19.3) | 197 (55.8) |
| Antihypertensive medication | 28 (25.2) | 132 (35.1) | 28 (24.6) | 157 (44.5) |
| Diabetes mellitus | 9 (8.1) | 14 (3.7) | 6 (5.3) | 19 (5.4) |
| Body mass index >30 kg/m² | 32 (28.8) | 79 (21.0) | 15 (13.2) | 83 (23.5) |
| Mean characteristic ± SD | | | | |
| Age, years | 38.3 (11.3) | 52.7 (15.8) | 39.8 (10.1) | 53.0 (15.0) |
| Body weight, kg | 71.6 (15.3) | 70.3 (14.5) | 76.0 (13.2) | 85.5 (14.0) |
| Body height, cm | 163.6 (5.7) | 163.6 (6.8) | 173.7 (7.4) | 176.6 (7.6) |
| Body mass index, kg/m² | 26.8 (5.5) | 26.2 (5.0) | 25.1 (3.6) | 27.4 (4.0) |
| Waist circumference, cm | 91.0 (12.6) | 89.9 (13.3) | 89.9 (12.4) | 97.8 (11.1) |
| Hip circumference, cm | 103.5 (12.5) | 103.9 (10.3) | 98.8 (10.0) | 103.9 (6.9) |
| Waist-to-hip ratio | 0.88 (0.1) | 0.86 (0.07) | 0.91 (0.06) | 0.94 (0.07) |
| Skinfold thickness, mm | 1.9 (0.9) | 2.6 (1.0) | 1.4 (0.8) | 2.1 (0.9) |
| Office systolic pressure, mm Hg | 108.8 (14.8) | 130.6 (18.2) | 114.9 (15.4) | 134.3 (15.2) |
| Office diastolic pressure, mm Hg | 68.8 (10.3) | 80.8 (9.4) | 74.7 (12.7) | 86.1 (9.4) |
| Home systolic pressure, mm Hg | 110.3 (14.6) | 118.2 (16.5) | 122.1 (12.6) | 124.9 (11.9) |
| Home diastolic pressure, mm Hg | 72.1 (9.7) | 74.9 (8.4) | 77.6 (10.1) | 78.1 (7.8) |
| Office heart rate, bpm | 74.0 (10.0) | 64.7 (8.7) | 70.8 (9.9) | 62.1 (8.9) |

Skinfold thickness was the average of measurements obtained at the triceps, subscapular area, and suprailiac crest. Office and home blood pressures were averages of 5 consecutive auscultatory readings or all home readings over 1 week. Office hypertension was a blood pressure ≥140 mm Hg systolic or ≥90 mm Hg diastolic. The corresponding thresholds for the home blood pressure were ≥135 mm Hg and ≥85 mm Hg. Patients on blood pressure lowering drugs were classified as hypertensive. Diabetes is a fasting or random blood glucose >7.0 or >11.1 mmol/l, respectively, or use of antidiabetic drugs. Significance of the between-cohort differences: *\( P < 0.05; \) †\( P < 0.01; \) ‡\( P < 0.001; \) and §\( P < 0.0001. \)
Our results are in agreement with previous studies showing that left ventricular mass increases with BP in both Blacks and Whites, but more sharply in Blacks than in Whites. However, the Black participants included in these studies were Americans of African ancestry. The potential racial disparity in the cardiac adaptation to high BP has not yet been studied in Black populations born and living in Africa. None of the aforementioned studies assessed consistency between the findings based on the in-office and the out-of-the-office BP. 

In addition, previous studies assessed LVH, using echocardiography or electrocardiography calibrated against echocardiography. We assessed LVH using various published combinations of ECG voltages and QRS duration (Table 1). Electrocardiography is less sensitive for the detection of anatomically increased left ventricular mass as compared to echocardiography and other cardiac imaging modalities. However, electrocardiography might provide separate information on myocardial integrity and neurohumoral and/or biochemical changes in the myocardium that cannot be detected using echocardiography. Calculating electrocardiography against echocardiography is therefore incorrect, but unfortunately, this practice has been perpetuated in the medical literature over the years since the advent of echocardiography. In a recent report, Bacharova and colleagues compared the prognostic value of LVH diagnosed by electrocardiography and magnetic resonance imaging in 4,748 participants enrolled in the Multi-Ethnic Study of Atherosclerosis. They observed that LVH detected by ECG (hazard ratio, 1.51; CI, 1.03–2.20) and LVH diagnosed with magnetic resonance imaging (hazard ratio, 1.81; CI, 1.33–2.46) were equally predictive of cardiovascular events. These findings confirm that LVH defined using electrocardiography and magnetic resonance imaging, although being different phenotypes, both carry important prognostic information.

To our knowledge, no previous report has assessed the ethnic differences in the effect of BP on QRS voltages or voltage–duration products as continuous variables (Table 4), whereas most considered ECG-LVH (Table 5). Categorizing an outcome has several limitations. First, LVH as a binary variable, compared with a continuous outcome, removes phenotypic variation. Second, most of the ECG criteria currently in use were developed in patients who had clinical conditions like severe hypertension or aortic stenosis that were expected to cause hypertrophy, were calibrated against autopsy findings of an enlarged heart, and/or against left ventricular mass determined by echocardiography or magnetic resonance imaging. The implication is that published ECG criteria for LVH (Table 4) define a phenotype among patients, who are already at the terminal stage of the cardiovascular disease continuum. Moreover, some of those criteria were developed over more than 2 decades ago when the thresholds for the diagnosis of hypertension were 160 mm Hg systolic or 100 mm Hg diastolic. We reasoned that increasing BP may have an incremental and graded effect on ECG voltages and voltage–duration products, which probably starts at much lower levels of BP than used for the development of the published criteria (Table 5).

If our findings are confirmed, they will help clinicians not only for risk assessment of patients within a large spectrum of cardiovascular risk, but also to monitor antihypertensive therapy. In the double-blind placebo-controlled Systolic Hypertension in Europe Trial, we defined LVH prospectively as the sum of 3 voltages (R in aVL, S in V1,
Table 4. Multivariable-adjusted associations between ECG measurements and blood pressure by ethnicity

| ECG criteria (reference) | Office systolic pressure | Home systolic pressure |  |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|---|
|                          | Blacks (95% CI)          | Whites (95% CI)        | P  |
|                          |                          |                        |    |
| Limb-lead voltages, mV   |                          |                        |    |
| Lewis3                   | 0.022 (−0.045, 0.089)    | 0.034 (−0.004, 0.073)  | 0.011 |
| Gubner–Ungerleider3      | 0.033 (−0.015, 0.080)    | 0.049 (0.028, 0.070)†  | 0.004 |
| Sokolow–Lyon12           | 0.019 (−0.007, 0.046)    | 0.024 (0.012, 0.036)‡  | 0.88  |
|                          |                          |                        |    |
| Pprecordial lead voltages, mV |                      |                        |    |
| Sokolow–Lyon12           | 0.176 (0.089, 0.263)‡    | 0.058 (0.023, 0.092)†  | <0.001 |
| Wilson13                 | 0.084 (0.024, 0.144)†    | 0.042 (0.019, 0.066)‡  | <0.0001 |
| Romhilt14                | 0.191 (0.095, 0.287)‡    | 0.073 (0.038, 0.107)‡  | <0.001 |
|                          |                          |                        |    |
| Combination of limb and precordial voltages, mV |              |                        |    |
| Cornell15                | 0.132 (0.074, 0.190)‡    | 0.064 (0.039, 0.090)‡  | <0.001 |
| Siegel16                 | 0.816 (0.440, 1.193)‡    | 0.445 (0.286, 0.604)‡  | 0.002 |
| Manning17                | 0.194 (0.071, 0.317)‡    | 0.111 (0.057, 0.165)‡  | 0.005 |
|                          |                          |                        |    |
| Voltages and QRS duration, mV.ms |                  |                        |    |
| Sokolow–Lyon16           | 15.7 (7.5, 24.0)‡        | 6.0 (2.8, 9.3)‡        | 0.001 |
| Cornell19                | 12.5 (6.5, 18.4)‡        | 6.7 (4.1, 9.4)‡        | 0.002 |
| Siegel19                 | 74.5 (36.3, 113.2)‡      | 47.8 (29.6, 66.1)‡     | 0.022 |

Values are regression coefficients (95% confidence interval) expressing the change in the ECG measurement associated with a 10-mm Hg increase in systolic blood pressure, adjusted for sex, age, body mass index, skinfold thickness, and intake of antihypertensive drugs. Significance of the associations: *P < 0.05; †P < 0.01; ‡P < 0.001; and §P < 0.0001. P values are for the ethnic differences in the associations.

Figure 2. Multivariable-adjusted associations between the Sokolow–Lyon (a) and Cornell voltages (b) and the Sokolow–Lyon (c) and Cornell (d) voltage × duration products and systolic blood pressure on office or home measurements in Blacks and Whites. All associations were adjusted for sex, age, body mass index, skinfold thickness and intake of antihypertensive drugs. Changes (Δ) in the voltages and voltage × duration products are given for a 10 mm Hg increase in systolic blood pressure (SBP). Horizontal bars denote the 95% confidence interval.
Table 5. Multivariable-adjusted odds ratios for having left ventricular hypertrophy in relation to systolic blood pressure

| Definition of LVH (reference) | Office systolic pressure | | Home systolic pressure | |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|
|                               | Blacks | Whites | P  | Blacks | Whites | P  |
| Limb-lead voltages            |        |        |    |        |        |    |
| Lewis                         | 1.06 (0.74, 1.54)         | 1.14 (0.84, 1.54)       | 0.73                    | 1.18 (0.76, 1.83)         | 1.11 (0.75, 1.63)         | 0.41 |
| Gubner–Ungerleider            | (3)    | (7)    |    | (3)    | (7)    |    |
| Sokolow–Lyon                  | (6)    | (7)    |    | (6)    | (7)    |    |
| Precordial lead voltages      |        |        |    |        |        |    |
| Sokolow–Lyon                  | 1.57 (1.19, 2.06)         | 1.17 (0.93, 1.46)       | 0.030                   | 1.58 (1.15, 2.17)         | 1.75 (1.31,2.33)          | 0.59 |
| Wilson                        | (3)    | (3)    |    | (3)    | (3)    |    |
| Romhilt                       | 1.58 (1.07, 2.33)         | (7)                     |                         | 1.34 (0.84, 2.12)         | (7)                     |     |
| Combination of limb and precordial voltages |        |        |    |        |        |    |
| Cornell                       | 1.72 (1.28, 2.32)         | 1.40 (1.21, 1.62)       | 0.067                   | 1.68 (1.21, 2.33)         | 1.48 (1.23, 1.77)         | 0.10 |
| Siegel                        | (4)    | (4)    |    | (4)    | (4)    |    |
| Manning                       | 1.40 (0.75, 2.61)         |                         |                         | 1.96 (0.88, 4.34)         |                         |     |
| Voltage × QRS duration products, mV.ms |        |        |    |        |        |    |
| Sokolow–Lyon                  | 2.21 (1.53, 3.18)         | 1.15 (0.97, 1.36)       | 0.003                   | 2.21 (1.53, 3.18)         | 1.52 (1.22, 1.89)         | 0.09 |
| Cornell                       | 1.92 (1.44, 2.56)         | 1.15 (0.97, 1.36)       | 0.003                   | 1.61 (1.12, 2.31)         | 1.14 (0.85, 1.52)         | 0.03 |
| Siegel                        | 1.65 (1.19, 2.28)         | 1.21 (0.96, 1.53)       | 0.037                   | 1.48 (1.07, 2.05)         | 1.47 (1.20, 1.80)         | 0.66 |
| Any of the criteria           | 1.95 (1.47, 2.60)         | 1.20 (1.06, 1.35)       | <0.0001                 | 2.27 (1.61, 3.19)         | 1.30 (1.12, 1.51)         | < 0.0001 |

Values are odds ratios (95% confidence interval) associated with a 10-mm Hg increase in systolic pressure and were adjusted for sex, age, body mass index, skinfold thickness, and intake of antihypertensive drugs. Significance of the odds ratios: *P < 0.05; †P < 0.01; ‡P < 0.001; and §P < 0.0001. If the number of patients with left ventricular hypertrophy was smaller than 10 (number given), the odds ratio was not calculated. P values are for the ethnic differences in the odds ratios.

and R in V3 both at baseline and at yearly follow-up visits.33 The adjusted relative hazard ratio associated with a 1 mV higher voltage sum at baseline, amounted to 1.10 (CI, 1.02–1.18) and 1.15 (CI, 1.04–1.27) for all-cause and cardiovascular mortality and to 1.21 (CI, 1.08–1.36) and 1.18 (CI, 1.08–1.29) for stroke and cardiac events, respectively (P < 0.01). A 1-mV decrease in ECG voltages during follow-up independently predicted a lower incidence of cardiac events with a hazard ratio of 0.86 (CI, 0.76–0.98; P = 0.05), but not of stroke or mortality.33

The prognostic implication of electrocardiographically derived LVH among Blacks born and living in Africa is not yet known. However, prospective studies in African Americans suggest that LVH contributes more to the risk of cardiovascular mortality in Blacks than in Whites.34,35 Among 1,089 Black people drawn from a Chicago hospital registry Liao and colleagues34 studied the effect of echocardiographically determined LVH on survival in comparison with the number of stenotic coronary vessels and left ventricular systolic function. In a multivariable analysis, the relative risk of death associated with LVH was 2.4 as compared to 1.6 and 2.0 for multivessel disease and ejection fraction lower than 45%. The population attributable risk fraction in this cohort revealed that for every 100 deaths 1%, 9%, 22%, and 37% were attributable to single- vessel disease, left ventricular systolic dysfunction, multivessel disease, and LVH, respectively.34

Our current findings are particularly relevant for low- and middle-income countries, where health care resources are limited and the infrastructure and skills to operate high-tech equipment, such as sophisticated echocardiographic devices or cardiac magnetic resonance imaging are lacking. The implication is that assessment of electrocardiographically derived LVH should be an integral part of the cardiovascular assessment even when patients present with BP within the ranges presumed to be normal.

Notwithstanding the clinical relevance of our current observations, our study should also be interpreted within the context of its potential limitations and applied methodologic approaches. We considered only 12 among 37 criteria36 that have been reported in the literature. However, these 12 selected criteria3,12–19 are among those most commonly used in the literature and in clinical practice. Furthermore, we combined criteria whose diagnostic performances have been compared between Blacks and Whites or evaluated for diagnostic performance among Nigerians.37 We also decided to use variables that can easily be obtained from automated electrocardiography without the need for interpretation by a cardiologist. This is to ensure widespread clinical applicability of our methods in a setting, where expertise for reading electrocardiograms is scarce. Our study involved a small sample of Nigerians living in Abuja and may not be representative for the whole sub-Saharan continent. However, our results have external validity as our findings are in line with other findings among Blacks living in the United States.6–9 Additionally, the same validated epidemiologic methods were used in both population cohorts compared in this report.
Perspectives
We showed strong association between ECG-LVH and SBP in Blacks born and living in sub-Saharan Africa. While confirming previous findings in African compared with White Americans, we advocate that our observations are particularly relevant for the low-resource sub-Saharan region. Portable ECG devices, which as the recorder used in the current study have the size of a small pocket book and do not require a power module and which via smartphone, notebook or an integrated SIM card (subscriber identity module) can access Internet might become a practicable instrument for risk stratification in remote or deprived African communities. Combined with office and home BP, the ECG indexes might be logged onto a central server, via which experienced ECG readers and hypertension specialist might assist local health care providers in guiding the management of cardiovascular risk.

SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL
Supplementary materials are available at American Journal of Hypertension online.

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DISCLOSURE
The authors declared no conflict of interest.

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