Hypertension and Cardiovascular Trends in India
Ravikanth Garipalli, Mohammed Sadiq Azam
Department of Cardiology, Krishna Institute of Medical Sciences, Secunderabad, Telangana, India

Abstract
HTN is found to have a high prevalence across various states in our country. Latest data have shown that 25–30% of population from urban areas and 10–20% of those in rural India are hypertensive. According to the 2011 census, there are around 95–100 million adults with HTN in India (of the total of 1.21 billion). Pre-HTN and Stage I HTN constitute a major chunk of the hypertensive population in India. There is a dearth of awareness, as well as very low rates of control and appropriate therapy in India, a fact with a rural preponderance. Lower socioeconomic status, living in rural areas and female gender are determinants of poor control and treatment.

Key words: Cardiovascular trends india, hypertension, hypertension trends

Introduction
Cardiovascular diseases (CVDs) cause most of the death worldwide. Hypertension (HTN) leads to 57% of cerebrovascular accidents and 24% of all coronary artery disease-deaths in India.[1] According to the World Health Organisation, HTN is one of the leading causes of premature deaths around the globe.[2] The prevalence of CVD is increasing in alarming proportion in India and it accounts for 30% of all deaths. Increasing incidence of CV risk factors such as hypertension (HTN), diabetes mellitus, tobacco use, and metabolic syndrome leads to increasing CVD in India.

Apart from tobacco cessation, control of HTN forms the most important of the various treatment strategies to reduce CV mortality. HTN control is poor in developing countries. The Prospective Urban Rural Epidemiology study reported that control of HTN is about 50% in high-income countries and 10% in low- and lower middle-income countries.[3] Studies have reported better control of HTN rates in the past 50 years from Western Europe and the USA.[4] The National Health and Nutrition Examination Surveys from 1988 to 2008 and 1999 to 2012 have reported that the prevalence of HTN remained static at 30–35% during this period, whereas increasing rates of HTN treatment (from 60% to 75%) and its control (from 53% to 69%) were observed.[5] There is a linear relationship between elevation of blood pressure (BP) and CV risk, as the BP rises above 115/75 mmHg.[6] The Global Burden of Diseases (GBD) 2015 analysis reveals that the estimated mortality rate per year associated with systolic BP (SBP) of at least 110–115 mmHg between 1990 and 2015 has risen from 135.6 to 145.2/100,000 persons.[7] Patel et al. have estimated that a decrease of 2 mmHg SBP in the population can prevent approximately 150,000 strokes and coronary artery disease (CAD) deaths in our country.[8] However, prospective data on HTN trends with respect to prevalence, awareness, and treatment from our country are scarce.

Prevalence of HTN in India
Several Indian studies over the years have shown increasing prevalence of HTN in both urban and rural areas.[1,9-13] In the mid-1950s, epidemiological studies had employed older World Health Organization diagnostic definitions (SBP ≥ 160 mmHg and/or diastolic BP [DBP] ≥ 95 mmHg) and reported an urban prevalence of 1.2–4%. The urban prevalence of HTN has been steadily rising from around 3–4% in the early 1960s to 11–15.5% in the mid-1900s. The prevalence in rural areas though low has also shown a significant rise from <1% in the early 1960s to 5–7% in the late 1990s.[11]
Later studies of prevalence employed the JNC-7 diagnostic criteria (known HTN or SBP ≥140 mmHg and/or DBP ≥90 mmHg).\(^{[12,13]}\) There have been multiple studies (mostly regional) from urban [Table 1] and rural [Table 2] Indian populations.\(^{[14]}\) These studies report varying prevalence rates of HTN, 20%–60% in urban areas and 7.2%–55.6% in rural areas. Among rural areas, Assam has a very high prevalence of HTN in tea plantation workers due to high salt intake, excess alcohol use, and Khaini use.\(^{[15]}\)

Anchala et al. in a review and meta-analysis reported the prevalence of awareness and control of HTN in urban/rural areas of different regions of India (North, East, South, and West).\(^{[12]}\) HTN in India was prevalent in about 29.8% overall and about 33% of urban and 25% of rural population [Table 3].

### Table 1: Prevalence studies in urban population\(^{[14]}\)

| Authors       | Year | Place     | Age group (years) | Sample size (n) | Prevalence (%) |
|---------------|------|-----------|-------------------|-----------------|----------------|
| Gupta et al.  | 1995 | Jaipur    | >20               | 2212            | 31             |
| Anand et al.  | 2000 | Mumbai    | 30–60             | 1662            | 34             |
| Gupta et al.  | 2002 | Jaipur    | >20               | 1123            | 33             |
| Shanthirani et al. | 2003 | Chennai | >20               | 1262            | 21             |
| Gupta        | 2004 | Mumbai    | >35               | 88653           | 48             |
| Prabhakaran  | 2005 | Delhi     | 20–59             | 2935            | 30             |
| Reddy et al. | 2006 | National  | 20–69             | 19973           | 27             |
| Mohan et al. | 2007 | Chennai   | >20               | 2350            | 20             |
| Yadav et al. | 2008 | Lucknow   | >30               | 1746            | 32             |
| Gupta et al. | 2012 | National  | >35               | 2616            | 48             |
| Prince et al.| 2012 | Chennai   | >60               | 1000            | 60             |
| Joshi et al. | 2012 | National  | 49 (mean)         | 15662           | 46             |
| Gupta et al. | 2013 | National  | >20               | 6106            | 32             |
| Bhansali     | 2014 | National  | >20               | 14059           | 26             |

### Table 2: Prevalence studies in rural populations\(^{[14]}\)

| Authors       | Place     | Year reported | Age group (years) | Sample size (n) | Prevalence (%) |
|---------------|-----------|---------------|-------------------|-----------------|----------------|
| Gupta et al.  | Rajasthan | 1994          | >20               | 3148            | 17             |
| Kushima       | Andhra    | 2004          | >20               | 1316            | 21             |
| Hazarika et al.| Assam     | 2004          | >30               | 3180            | 33             |
| Krishnan et al.| Haryana | 2008          | 15–64             | 2828            | 9              |
| Todkar et al. | Maharashtra| 2009        | >20               | 1297            | 7              |
| Kinra et al.  | All India | 2010          | 20–69             | 1983            | 20             |
| Gupta et al.  | All India | 2012          | >35               | 4624            | 32             |
| Prince et al. | Tamil Nadu| 2012          | >65               | 1000            | 29             |
| Kalar et al.  | Tamil Nadu| 2012          | 25–64             | 10463           | 21             |
| Borah et al.  | Assam     | 2012          | >30               | 916             | 55             |
| Haddad et al. | Kerala    | 2012          | 18–96             | 1660            | 24             |
| Meshram et al.| Kerala    | 2012          | >20               | 4193            | 40             |
| Bhagyalakshmi et al.| Gujarat | 2013        | 15–64             | 1684            | 15             |

### Table 3: Prevalence of HTN region wise (rural vs. urban)\(^{[12]}\)

| Rural | Prevalence | Urban | Prevalence |
|-------|------------|-------|------------|
| North | 16.7       | North | 33.5       |
| East  | 33.17      | East  | 33.28      |
| West  | 18.22      | West  | 34.89      |
| South | 28.27      | South | 33.12      |
| Overall | 27.61 | Overall | 33.81      |

HTN: Hypertension

### Awareness, Treatment, and Control

Only few prospective cross-sectional studies on HTN prevalence, awareness, and control were reported (Jaipur Heart Watch [JHW] study in urban population and National
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Table 4: JHW studies – trends in age- and sex-adjusted HTN prevalence and awareness[^15]

| Number | JHW 1 | JHW 2 | JHW 3 | JHW 4 | JHW 5 | JHW 6 |
|--------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
|        | 2212  | 1123  | 458   | 1127  | 739   | 1781  |
| Years of study | 1992–94 | 1999–2001 | 2003–04 | 2006–07 | 2010–11 | 2012–14 |
| Crude prevalence rate | 30.9 | 36.9 | 51.3 | 53.3 | 34.4 | 38.9 |
| Age-/sex-adjusted prevalence | 29.9 | 35.3 | 35.8 | 39.4 | 34.4 | 36  |
| HTN awareness (% of total HTN cases) | 13.2 | 43.8 | 49.1 | 44 | 49.2 | 56.1 |
| Treatment | 9 | 22 | 38 | 34 | 41 | 36 |
| Control | 2 | 14 | 13 | 18 | 21 | 21 |

HTN: Hypertension, JHW: Jaipur Heart Watch

Capital Region (NCR) study in urban and rural population). The JHW study [Table 4] is the only prospective cross-sectional HTN and other CV risk factor epidemiological studies in India which looked at HTN awareness and treatment over 25 years.[^15]

There has been a steady rise in awareness (13% in the 1990s to >56% in the 2010s) of HTN despite the overall prevalence of HTN being varied from 30% to 50% in JHW studies [Table 4]. Even though awareness in urban area has increased to 56%, there is still a great need to increase awareness further to 70–80% as in most developed countries by screening of people for HTN and public education.

There has also been a phenomenal rise in HTN treatment through the years among all participants in the JHW studies. The rates of treatment have risen from 9% in JHW-1 to 36% in JHW-6. HTN control, however, remained low among participants, but there was an overall increase in control rates from 2% in JHW-1 to 21% in JHW-6 over 25 years.

Ambuj et al. conducted two representative cross-sectional surveys (Survey-1 from 1991 to 1994 and Survey-2 from 2010 to 2012) in the NCR of India. HTN prevalence was found to have risen from 23% to 42% and 11% to 29% in urban NCR and rural NCR of India, respectively [Table 4].[^16]

Overall, awareness, treatment, and control rates of HTN between the two surveys, however, remained the same. There was a rise in HTN prevalence with a rise in body mass index (BMI) as well as educational status in both urban and rural areas. Diabetic and pre-diabetic populations had the highest prevalence of HTN. There was a higher prevalence of HTN associated with ethanol consumption. This study has reported the highest increased prevalence of HTN in the youngest age group (35–44 years).

In a recent meta-analysis, Anchala et al. reviewed HTN awareness, treatment, and control studies and found that overall awareness was 42% for urban and 25% for rural population. Approximately 35% of urban population were aware of HTN in almost all studies, a fact reflected in the treatment and control rates (37.6% and 20.2%, respectively), while in rural populations, the treatment rate was 25.1% and control rate was 10.7%. The control rates, however, in urban and rural populations have remained low (11.6%–28.7% for urban and 6.5%–15% for rural).[^12] Our country has a high prevalence of HTN with low awareness, treatment, and control rates in both urban and rural populations. Poor control can be linked to myriad factors such as female gender, poverty, rural residence, and low educational status as well as obesity.[^1]

**Trends of CVD in India**

The India State-Level Disease Burden Initiative has reported a varied epidemiological transition among the states of India from 1990 to 2016 as part of the GBD, injuries, and risk factors study 2016. The investigators analyzed the prevalence and disability-adjusted life-years (DALYs) due to CVDs and the major component causes in the states of India from 1990 to 2016. They categorized states into four groups based on epidemiological transition level (ETL), which was defined using the ratio of DALYS from communicable diseases to those from non-communicable diseases and injuries combined, with a low ratio denoting high ETL and vice versa [Table 6]. The investigators found that CVDs were

[^15]: Reference to the source of the table.
[^16]: Reference to the source of the data.
[^12]: Reference to the source of the findings.
[^1]: Reference to the source of the comparison.

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**Table 5: Awareness, Treatment and Control trends in Indian hypertensive patients in two separate surveys (Survey 1: 1991-1994; Survey 2: 2010-2012)[^16]**

| Demographic characteristic | Awareness Survey 1% | Awareness Survey 2% | Treatment Survey 1% | Treatment Survey 2% | Control Survey 1% | Control Survey 2% |
|----------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Total                      | 38                  | 39                  | 32                  | 32                  | 14               | 13               |
| Men                        | 33                  | 27                  | 28                  | 21                  | 13               | 7                |
| Women                      | 42                  | 51                  | 35                  | 44                  | 16               | 19               |
| Urban                      |                     |                     |                     |                     |                  |                  |
| Total                      | 49                  | 46                  | 49                  | 40                  | 16               | 16               |
| Men                        | 44                  | 35                  | 38                  | 29                  | 11               | 11               |
| Women                      | 53                  | 57                  | 45                  | 50                  | 20               | 20               |
| Rural                      |                     |                     |                     |                     |                  |                  |
| Total                      | 7                   | 27                  | 7                   | 20                  | 8                | 8                |
| Men                        | 6                   | 17                  | 5                   | 11                  | 3                | 3                |
| Women                      | 9                   | 40                  | 9                   | 15                  | 15               | 15               |

HTN: Hypertension, NCR: National Capital Region

[^15]: Reference to the source of the data.
[^16]: Reference to the source of the findings.
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Vol. 5:3
Jul-Sep 2019

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responsible for 28% of overall mortality and 14% of DALYs
in India in 2016 when compared to 15% and 7% in 1990.

Men had a higher mortality burden from CAD, whereas the
burden from cerebrovascular accidents was similar between
men and women [Table 7]. Dietary risk factors which
contributed to around 56%, HTN (54%), air pollutants
(30%), dyslipidemia (29%), tobacco (19%), diabetes (17%),
and elevated BMI (15%) were the leading CV risk factors in
India [Table 8].

In general, from 1990 to 2016, the prevalence rates of high
SBP, high total cholesterol, and high fasting blood glucose have
increased in India and all ETL state groups while the prevalence
of smoking has reduced.

Table 6: Prevalence and DALY rates of cardiovascular diseases as per ETL group[17]

| ETL group       | Ischemic heart disease | Stroke | Rheumatic heart disease |
|-----------------|------------------------|--------|------------------------|
|                 | Prevalence (%) | DALYs (%) | Prevalence (%) | DALYs (%) | Prevalence (%) | DALYs (%) |
| Low (ratio 0.56–0.75) | 39          | 46.7      | 1.9          | 44.1      | -28.8        | -4.3       |
| Bihar           |             |           |             |           |              |            |
| Jharkhand       |             |           |             |           |              |            |
| Uttar Pradesh   |             |           |             |           |              |            |
| Rajasthan       |             |           |             |           |              |            |
| Meghalaya       |             |           |             |           |              |            |
| Assam           |             |           |             |           |              |            |
| Chhattisgarh    |             |           |             |           |              |            |
| Madhya Pradesh  |             |           |             |           |              |            |
| Odisha          |             |           |             |           |              |            |
| Lower middle (ratio 0.41–0.55) | 39.4      | 58.5      | 4.1          | 61.3      | -38          | 1.2        |
| Arunachal Pradesh |           |           |             |           |              |            |
| Mizoram         |           |           |             |           |              |            |
| Nagaland        |           |           |             |           |              |            |
| Uttarakhand     |           |           |             |           |              |            |
| Gujarat         |           |           |             |           |              |            |
| Tripura         |           |           |             |           |              |            |
| Sikkim          |           |           |             |           |              |            |
| Manipur         |           |           |             |           |              |            |
| Higher middle (ratio 0.31–0.40) | 34.8      | 57.3      | 3.5          | 61.3      | -37          | 3.3        |
| Haryana         |           |           |             |           |              |            |
| Delhi           |           |           |             |           |              |            |
| Telangana       |           |           |             |           |              |            |
| Andhra Pradesh  |           |           |             |           |              |            |
| Jammu and Kashmir |         |           |             |           |              |            |
| Karnataka       |           |           |             |           |              |            |
| West Bengal     |           |           |             |           |              |            |
| Maharashtra     |           |           |             |           |              |            |
| Other Union territories |       |           |             |           |              |            |
| High (ratio<0.31) | 33.6      | 68.7      | -15.9        | 67.7      | -42.6        | -1.0       |
| Himachal Pradesh |           |           |             |           |              |            |
| Punjab          |           |           |             |           |              |            |
| Tamil Nadu      |           |           |             |           |              |            |
| Goa             |           |           |             |           |              |            |
| Kerala          |           |           |             |           |              |            |
| India           | 33.8       | 53        | 0.2          | 53.6      | -33.1        | -1.1       |

DALYs: Disability-adjusted life-years, ETL: Epidemiological transition level

Table 7: Percentage of total deaths and DALYs due to each cause under cardiovascular diseases by sex in India, 2016[17]

| Demographic characteristic | Percentage of total deaths (%) | Percentage of total DALYs (%) |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|
|                            | Men   | Women | Men   | Women |
| Total cardiovascular disease | 29.2  | 26.7  | 15.8  | 12.2  |
| Ischemic heart disease      | 19.6  | 15.6  | 10.4  | 6.6   |
| Stroke                      | 6.9   | 7.3   | 3.6   | 3.4   |
| Hypertensive heart disease  | 1.1   | 1.6   | 0.6   | 0.7   |
| Rheumatic heart disease     | 0.8   | 1.5   | 0.7   | 1.0   |
| Atrial fibrillation and flutter | 0.17 | 0.25  | 0.13  | 0.15  |

DALYs: Disability-adjusted life-years

In general, from 1990 to 2016, the prevalence rates of high
SBP, high total cholesterol, and high fasting blood glucose have
increased in India and all ETL state groups while the prevalence
of smoking has reduced.
Table 8: Percentage contribution of major risk factors to ischemic heart disease DALYs in India[17]

| Risk factor                | DALYs | Men (%) | Women (%) |
|----------------------------|-------|---------|-----------|
| Dietary risks              |       | 71.5    | 68.9      |
| High systolic blood pressure|       | 54      | 54.3      |
| Air pollution              |       | 37.5    | 36.1      |
| High total cholesterol     |       | 44.7    | 43.2      |
| Tobacco                    |       | 27.2    | 11.4      |
| High fasting plasma glucose|       | 20.7    | 18.2      |
| High body mass index       |       | 14.5    | 14.3      |

DALYs: Disability-adjusted life-years

Conclusion

HTN is prevalent in about 30% of the urban and 25% of the rural populace of India. Only about 25% of the hypertensive population in rural areas are aware and receive therapy for HTN. In contrast, 42% of urban Indian hypertensive patients are aware and 38% receive therapy. However, probably, the point of major concern remains the disturbing fact that a significant minority of the urban (25%) as well as rural (10%) population have their BP at target, which exposes them to the associated morbidities and risk of mortality with uncontrolled HTN. The rising trends of CVD and the high prevalence of existing risk factors such as HTN, high BMI, smoking, as well as the emergence of new risk factors like air pollution, especially in the urban areas, are a sign of an impending epidemiological shift in the landscape of CVDs in India.

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How to cite this article: Garipalli R, Azam MS. Hypertension trends in India. Hypertens Trends in India. Hypertension Journal 2019;5(3):104-108.

Source of support: Nil, Conflicts of interest: None