A cross sectional study of hypertension in adolescent girls of district Moradabad, Uttar Pradesh, India

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Received: 06 May 2016
Accepted: 14 May 2016

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ABSTRACT

Background: In Indian adolescent school children, there is a high prevalence of obesity and hypertension. The present study was undertaken in the urban slums of Moradabad district of Uttar Pradesh, India with the broad aim of assessing the prevalence of hypertension & associated factors among adolescent girls.

Methods: This cross-sectional study was conducted among 405 adolescent girls. Simple random sampling was used to select the individuals from each slum. Blood pressure was classified as per Joint National Committee [JNC]-7 criteria. A pre-tested and pre-designed schedule was used to collect the information. Chi-square test was applied to analyse data using SPSS software.

Results: Nearly 15.8% adolescents were found pre-hypertensive, 1.5% were having stage I hypertensive and 0.7% of the girls were stage II hypertensive. About 15.6% were underweight and 3.5% were overweight. Pre-hypertensive/hypertensive was higher among those aged between 17-19 years (20.02%), belonging to upper socioeconomic class (23.0%) and those belonging to nuclear family (18.6%). Higher proportions of those consuming non-vegetarian food (21.4%), saturated fat (19.3%) and iodized salt (17.7%) were found hypertensive/pre-hypertensive.

Conclusions: The prevalence of hypertension among the adolescent age group was alarmingly high. There is a need to create awareness among school students particularly in adolescent age group regarding hypertension and its complications.

Key words: Hypertension, Adolescents, Girls, Slum, Blood pressure

INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is an important stage of growth and development in the lifespan and is a crucial period of transition from childhood to adulthood in the life of human beings. WHO identifies adolescence as the period of age between 10-19 years. They are no longer children but are not considered adults yet. Adolescence in girls has been recognized as a special period which signifies the transition from girlhood to womanhood. Globally, adolescent girls constitute about 1/5th of total female population, while in India, adolescent girls account for a little more than one-fifth of the population (21.4%). Hypertension is a common disease associated with high morbidity and mortality. The disease is a silent threat to the health of people all over the world. It is suggested that hypertension has its origin in childhood but goes undetected unless specifically looked for during this period. Thus, early detection of hypertension and its precipitating or aggravating factors are important if one is to evolve measures so that complications of hypertension can be prevented.
Pennsylvania have reported that the role of hypertension as a risk factor is clear and familial aggregation of blood pressure and tracking phenomenon support the concept that children with hypertension are likely to be hypertensive as adults and will be at risk for early coronary heart disease.\(^5\) in the prevailing era of adult hypertension, limited data are available regarding the profile of adolescents. Therefore this study was undertaken with the objective of assessing the prevalence of hypertension, overweight and obesity among adolescent girls in district Moradabad, Uttar Pradesh, India.

**METHODS**

This cross sectional study was conducted in the Department of Community Medicine, for a period of one year from June 2013 to May 2014. The study was carried out in the urban slums of Moradabad district, Uttar Pradesh, India with the broad aim of assessing the prevalence of hypertension and associated factors among adolescent girls. Among all the slums, 8 highly populous slums were selected by random sampling. Simple random sampling was used to select the individuals from each slum. The first household was selected at random by lottery method. Thereafter, the other subjects were interviewed in sequence till the desired sample size was achieved. Considering the prior prevalence rate of undernutrition in adolescent girls as 58.5%\(^3\), with 5% error, the estimated sample size was 373. About 9 % drop out rate and non-response rate was added.

Adolescent girls were interviewed in privacy and desired information was collected on a pilot-tested, structured and predesigned schedule through oral questionnaire method. Finally a total of 405 adolescent girls were interviewed. The data was statistically analysed utilizing SPSS (version 17.0) for Windows. Anthropometric measurements (height and weight) were recorded. Height was taken with the help of measuring tape to the nearest 0.1 cm. The weight was recorded to the nearest 0.5 kg using portable weighing machine and wearing minimum clothing. Body mass index (BMI) was computed by using the standard equation BMI= weight (in kg)/height (in meters).\(^5\)

| Table 1: JNC - 7 classification of hypertension (2003).\(^6\) |
|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Category        | Systolic BP in mm Hg | Diastolic BP in mm Hg |
| Normal          | <120             | <80              |
| Pre-hypertension| 120-139          | 80-89            |
| Grade-I Hypertension | 140-159      | 90-99            |
| Grade-II Hypertension | 160 and above | 100 and above   |

The blood pressure of the subjects was taken with the help of mercury Sphygmomanometer. While taking B.P. clothing from arm were removed and cuff was encircled around arm and Korotkoff’s sounds were auscultated in the antecubital fossa. Blood pressure was classified as per Joint National Committee [JNC]-7 criteria.\(^6\)

**RESULTS**

In the present study maximum girls were in age group of 14-16 years (41.5%), Majority were from nuclear family (69.1%) and were educated between primary to middle school (59.0 %). According to modified Prasad’s classification maximum number of the adolescent girls (54.3%) belonged to class IV (Table 2).

| Table 2: Distribution of the adolescents according to bio-social factors. |
|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Variable        | Total (n=405)   | N    | %   |
| Age group       |                 |      |     |
| 10-13           | 153             | 33.7 |
| 14-16           | 168             | 41.5 |
| 17-19           | 84              | 20.7 |
| Type of family  |                 |      |     |
| Nuclear         | 280             | 69.1 |
| Joint           | 125             | 30.9 |
| Education       |                 |      |     |
| Primary or below| 20              | 4.9  |
| Above primary to middle | 239 | 59.0 |
| High school-intermediate | 142 | 35.1 |
| Above Intermediate | 4 | 1.0  |
| Socioeconomic status |           |      |     |
| I               | 13              | 3.2  |
| II              | 52              | 12.8 |
| III             | 85              | 21.0 |
| IV              | 220             | 54.3 |
| V               | 35              | 8.6  |

In present study, 82.0% adolescents were normotensive, 15.8% adolescents were found pre-hypertensive, 1.5% were having stage I hypertensive and 0.7% of the girls were stage II hypertensive (Table 3).

| Table 3: Distribution of adolescent girls according to their blood pressures (measured as per JNC-VII criteria). |
|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Blood pressure  | Total | %   |
| Normal          | 332   | 82.0 |
| Pre-hypertensive| 64    | 15.8 |
| Stage I hypertensive | 6   | 1.5  |
| Stage II hypertensive | 3  | 0.7  |
| Total           | 405   | 100.0 |
Out of 405 adolescent girls, 63 (15.6%) were underweight, only 14 (3.5%) were overweight while 328 (81.0%) adolescent girls were normal (Table 4).

Table 4: Distribution of the adolescent girls according to their BMI

| BMI      | Total (n=405) | %   |
|----------|---------------|-----|
| Underweight | 63            | 15.6|
| Normal     | 328           | 81.0|
| Overweight | 14            | 3.5 |
| Obese      | 0             | 0.0 |

Nearly one fifth of adolescents girls aged between 17-19 years were found pre-hypertensive/hypertensive. A higher proportion (23.0%) of adolescents girls belonging to upper socioeconomic class were found Pre-hypertensive/hypertensive while a higher proportion (18.6%) of adolescents girls belonging to nuclear family were Pre-hypertensive/hypertensive (Table 5). Out of 103 non vegetarians, 22 (21.4%) were found hypertensive/pre-hypertensives. Among 202 adolescents consuming saturated fat, 39 (19.3%) were hypertensive/pre-hypertensives. Out of 367 girls consuming iodized salt, 65 (17.7%) were hypertensive/pre-hypertensives (Table 6).

Table 5: Hypertension/pre-hypertension in relation to socio-demographic characteristics of the adolescent girls.

| Socio demographic characteristics | Total (n=405) | No. of Pre-hypertensive/hypertensive | %   | Chi-Square (df) | P-Value |
|-----------------------------------|--------------|--------------------------------------|-----|----------------|---------|
| No. Studied                       |              |                                      |     |                |         |
| Age group (years)                 |              |                                      |     |                |         |
| 1. 10-13                          | 153          | 23                                   | 15.0| 1.05 (2)       | 0.590   |
| 2. 14-16                          | 168          | 33                                   | 19.6|                |         |
| 3. 17-19                          | 84           | 17                                   | 20.2|                |         |
| A. Socio-economic class (Modified Prasad’s classification) | | | | 0.723 (4) | 0.948 |
| I                                 | 13           | 3                                    | 23.0|                |         |
| II                                | 52           | 11                                   | 21.1|                |         |
| III                               | 85           | 17                                   | 20.0|                |         |
| IV                                | 220          | 39                                   | 17.7|                |         |
| V                                 | 35           | 5                                    | 14.3|                |         |
| B. Type of family                 |              |                                      |     |                |         |
| 1. Nuclear                        | 280          | 52                                   | 18.6| 0.128 (1)      | 0.720   |
| 2. Joint                          | 125          | 21                                   | 16.8|                |         |

Table 6: Hypertension/pre-hypertension in relation to dietary habits.

| Dietary Characteristics | No. Studied | Hypertensives/ Pre-hypertensives | %   | Chi Sq (df), p-value |
|-------------------------|-------------|----------------------------------|-----|----------------------|
|                         | N           |                                  |     |                      |
| Dietary habits          |             |                                  |     |                      |
| Vegetarian              | 302         | 51                               | 16.9| 0.709 (1), 0.400     |
| Non Vegetarian          | 103         | 22                               | 21.4|                      |
| Type of cooking oil used|             |                                  |     |                      |
| Saturated fat           | 202         | 39                               | 19.3| 0.438 (2), 0.803     |
| Unsaturated fat         |             |                                  |     |                      |
| MUFA                    | 4           | 1                                | 25.0|                      |
| PUFA                    | 199         | 33                               | 16.6|                      |
| Type of salt            |             |                                  |     |                      |
| Iodized                 | 367         | 65                               | 17.7| 0.177 (1), 0.674     |
| Non iodised             | 38          | 8                                | 21.0|                      |

DISCUSSION

Out of 405 adolescent girls surveyed, majority were aged between 14-16 years (41.5%) and were from nuclear families (69.1%). A very large number of the adolescent girls, 385 (95.06%) were educated above primary school level. Majority belonged to socioeconomic class IV (54.3%) as per Modified Prasad’s classification.

As per survey conducted by state planning institute, UP about 14.17% adolescents are aged between 10-14 years and 9.84% adolescents are aged between 15-19 years in district Moradabad. As per census 2011 the literacy rate of urban slums was 84.5% (79.7% among the females and 89.0% among the males).
In present study, 82.0% adolescents were normotensive, 15.8% adolescents were found pre-hypertensive, 1.5% were having stage I hypertensive and 0.7% of the girls were stage II hypertensive.

It has been varying widely in different Indian studies; from 0.46% to 11.9%. In a study conducted among school students of Adolescent age group in Mysore, the prevalence was 61.8%. In another study done in Shimla, the prevalence was 20.9.

In the present study 15.6% adolescent were undernourished (thinness) while 3.5% adolescents were overweight.

A meta-analysis of nine studies showed 12.6 per cent of children to be overweight and 3.3 per cent to be obese indicating the seriousness of the situation. A review of a few select studies during 2001 to 2012 showed a prevalence of overweight among children aged 10-19 years to be 9.9 to 19.9 per cent; high in both boys (3 to 15.1%) than in girls (5.3 to 13.3%) indicating early onset of obesity affecting more of urban school adolescents (3.4 to 6.5%) as compared to 0.6 per cent among the rural adolescents with significant gender variations.

Vohra R et al in Lucknow found the prevalence of overweight and obesity was 17% and 0.73% respectively among school-going children. The strong relationship between hypertension and diet habits has also been arrived in another study conducted by Savitha MR et al. in Mysore.

**CONCLUSION**

The prevalence of hypertension among the adolescent age group was alarmingly high. There is a need to create awareness among school students particularly in adolescent age group regarding hypertension and its complications. School authorities should organize screening programmes in school particularly for hypertension. Tracking of blood pressure should be done, which will help in identifying the at-risk group of adolescents, who can develop hypertension in future period.

**Funding:** No funding sources

**Conflict of interest:** None declared

**Ethical approval:** The study was approved by the Institutional Ethics Committee

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Cite this article as: Kumar R, Sharma M, Srivastava A. A cross sectional study of hypertension in adolescent girls of district Moradabad, Uttar Pradesh, India. Int J Community Med Public Health 2016;3:1388-92.