were normal and his serum zinc value was 11 mmol/l (72 mg/100 ml) (normal 11-19 mmol/l (72-124 mg/100 ml)). He gave no response to oral zinc supplements. When the captopril was stopped on the second occasion his taste recovered within three days.

Case 3—A 43-year-old woman had received treatment with hydrochlorothiazide 100 mg/day for eight weeks and captopril (in increasing doses to 300 mg) for four weeks. She then noticed a disturbance of taste affecting all types of food and accompanied on occasions by slight nausea. All biochemical and haematological values were normal and her plasma zinc concentration was 13 mmol/l (85 mg/100 ml). The dose of captopril was reduced stepwise over the subsequent three weeks but the disturbance did not clear until about two days after the drug was withdrawn. Oral zinc supplements were used during the withdrawal phase without apparent effect.

Comment

Three out of 16 patients treated with the angiotensin-converting enzyme inhibitor captopril (SQ 14225) developed a loss of taste which persisted until the drug was withdrawn. A persistent abnormal taste in the mouth accompanied the disturbance in two patients and nausea was present in one. This side effect has been the most prominent adverse reaction to captopril in our experience with the drug.

The explanation for the development of this problem is not clear. Several other drugs, including griseofulvin, lincomycin, penicillamine, and thiamazole, are reported to cause a similar disturbance, and in the case of thiamazole and penicillamine it has been suggested that the problem results from the complexing of zinc by these drugs.³ Zinc depletion in humans after treatment with D-penicillamine or histidine or after burns, liver damage, or malabsorption is commonly associated with decreased taste acuity that may respond to zinc supplements.⁴

Captopril binds to zinc ions present at the active centre of the converting enzyme⁵ and might be expected to reduce tissue zinc levels. The normal plasma zinc concentrations and the failure of zinc supplementation to relieve the disturbance in two cases do not, however, support this suggestion.

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University of Melbourne, Clinical Pharmacology and Therapeutics Unit, Austin Hospital, Heidelberg, Victoria 3084

J J McNEIL, MB, FRACP, National Heart Foundation postgraduate research scholar

A ANDERSON, MB, MRCP, fellow in clinical pharmacology

N CHRISTOPHIDIS, MB, FRACP, National Health and Medical Research Council postgraduate research scholar

B JARROTT, PHD, BPHARM, senior lecturer in clinical pharmacology

W J LOUIS, MD, FRACP, professor of clinical pharmacology

Screening for hypertension: a hospital-based home-visiting programme

Hypertension remains a common and dangerous disease for which effective treatment is available. Attempts have been made to screen populations considered to be at risk with varying success.^{1,2} A large hospital-based pilot study was undertaken to assess the feasibility of screening for hypertension by visiting at home the patients of an urban group practice. An excellent contact rate and follow-up attendance rate was achieved.

Population, methods, and results

The survey was conducted in Hove, Sussex, an urban English town. From the family practitioner committee records 7544 names and addresses of patients aged from 15 to 75 years inclusive on the lists of four general

practitioners of a group practice were obtained. Inaccuracy of records owing to changes of address or doctor or death reduced this to a total of 4993 possible contacts. These each received a letter explaining the purpose of the survey, and subsequently one or more home visits were made by a nurse. At the first visit a brief questionnaire was completed recording relevant medical history, drug therapy, and smoking habits. Blood pressure readings were taken on the right arm, in the sitting position, using a standard mercury sphygmomanometer (Korotoff V). Limits for "normal" blood pressures related to age were based on figures published by the New York Metropolitan Life Insurance Company³ and the Framingham study.⁴ Patients with a raised blood pressure were visited a second time at home. If the blood pressure was still raised they were referred to the hypertension clinic at the hospital. They were classified as hypertensive only when two further measurements at the clinic exceeded our normal range. Patients with a single raised reading were classified as labile and are being followed up only, whereas those persistently hypertensive were offered treatment.

The table summarises the results of the survey. Of all possible contacts, 92% (4545) were interviewed. The survey found 631 hypertensives, of whom 329 were already known to their doctors and 302 were previously undetected. Of the former group, less than 50% were judged to be adequately controlled by our criteria. All those who were requested to attend the follow-up clinic complied. In the group of newly discovered hypertensives 24% were under 45 years of age. The greatest number of hypertensive men occurred in the 45-54 age group and in the women in the 55-64 age group. The prevalence of hypertension, as defined by the age-related criteria, was found to be 14.2% of the population studied.

Summary of results of survey of hypertension in a population aged 15-75 years

Total population registered with practice	..	..	..	..	..	7544
Inaccurate records	..	..	..	..	..	2551
Remaining possible contacts	..	..	..	..	..	4993
Declined to co-operate	..	..	..	..	..	172
Uncontactable	..	..	..	..	..	398
Total willing to participate	..	..	..	..	..	4423
"Normal" blood pressure	..	..	..	..	..	3756
Total number of hypertensives	..	..	..	..	..	631
Previously known hypertensives	..	..	..	..	..	329
Previously undetected hypertensives	..	..	..	..	..	302
Classified as "labile" hypertensives	..	..	..	..	..	216

Comment

There is a relatively high prevalence of hypertension in the community. The major problem of a screening programme is contacting the target population and then achieving a high follow-up rate. We believe that our direct combined approach of an initial explanatory letter followed by at least two home visits by nurses was responsible for the high level of co-operation and the 100% follow-up rate at the hospital clinic. The high prevalence, asymptomatic nature, serious consequences, and efficacy of treatment of hypertension should justify the effort expended in screening the population. The cost of uncovering each new hypertensive patient was estimated in this survey to be about £100. This is not excessive when considering the age distribution and consequences of the disease and the costs of its morbidity and mortality. Our study shows the effectiveness of combined home visiting and hospital referral in detecting hypertension in a community without undue burden on general practitioner services.

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Renal Unit, Royal Sussex County Hospital, Brighton BN2 5BE

J A P TRAFFORD, MB, FRCP, consultant physician and director of unit

R IRELAND, MB, research fellow

R MCGONIGLE, MB, MRCP, medical registrar

P SHARPSTONE, MB, FRCP, consultant physician

L HALFORD-MAW, research assistant

R EVANS, SRN, sister-in-charge