Practice Research

Detection and management of hypertension in general practices in north west London

KARIM H KURI, ANDREW P RAINES

Abstract

An examination of the practice notes and attended correspondence of 800 patients aged 30-69 years in a random sample of 15 general practices in north west London showed that 480 (60%) of 800 patients attending their practice during the period from 1 August 1980 to 31 July 1981 had at least one visit to the practice, received at least one prescription for medication prescribed for hypertension, or had at least one blood pressure reading taken while attending the practice. Of the 480 patients with hypertension, 168 (35%) had two or more blood pressure readings and 104 (22%) of these had at least one blood pressure reading that exceeded 160 mmHg systolic or 95 mmHg diastolic blood pressure. Thirty-five per cent of the patients who had had at least one blood pressure reading were treated with one or more drugs prescribed for hypertension. The patients who had had at least one hypertensive episode were more likely to be prescribed one or more drugs prescribed for hypertension than those who had not had at least one hypertensive episode (P < 0.001).

Introduction

There is clear evidence that early detection and adequate treatment of moderate and severe hypertension in the elderly and population can appreciably reduce the risk of stroke, renal failure, and coronary heart disease and the evidence is equally relevant for patients attending general practice. It is estimated that about 50% of patients with hypertension have been untreated (Halperin et al., 1980). It is also estimated that up to 25% of patients with hypertension have been treated but untreated (Halperin et al., 1980). There are no satisfactory data on the extent to which patients with hypertension are treated.

Methods

The random sample of 150 general practices in north west London was selected from the list of general practitioners in north west London. Each practice was selected to be representative of the different areas of north west London. The 150 practices were visited by a research assistant who had been trained to attend the practice and to take blood pressure readings from the patients who were seen. The research assistant was supervised by a researcher who was also a general practitioner and who had been trained to attend the practices and to take blood pressure readings from the patients who were seen.

Results

The sample comprised 800 patients aged 30-69 years who attended the 150 practices during the period from 1 August 1980 to 31 July 1981. Of these patients, 480 (60%) had at least one visit to the practice, received at least one prescription for medication prescribed for hypertension, or had at least one blood pressure reading taken while attending the practice. Of the 480 patients with hypertension, 168 (35%) had two or more blood pressure readings and 104 (22%) of these had at least one blood pressure reading that exceeded 160 mmHg systolic or 95 mmHg diastolic blood pressure. Thirty-five per cent of the patients who had at least one blood pressure reading were treated with one or more drugs prescribed for hypertension. The patients who had had at least one hypertensive episode were more likely to be prescribed one or more drugs prescribed for hypertension than those who had not had at least one hypertensive episode (P < 0.001).

Discussion

Hypertension is a risk factor for coronary heart disease, stroke, and renal failure. It is estimated that about 50% of patients with hypertension have been untreated (Halperin et al., 1980). It is also estimated that up to 25% of patients with hypertension have been treated but untreated (Halperin et al., 1980). There are no satisfactory data on the extent to which patients with hypertension are treated.

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GERALD MICHAEL

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The records of patients who were registered with general practitioners in north west London were examined to assess the quality of care in managing hypertension. The quality of care was assessed by examining the notes of the patients who had had at least one visit to the practice, who had at least one blood pressure reading taken while attending the practice, and who had at least one prescription for medication prescribed for hypertension. The notes of the patients who had had at least one visit to the practice were examined to assess the quality of care in managing hypertension.

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