Examining the relationship between Herbal Medicine Use and Blood Pressure Control in Individuals on Antihypertensive Therapy in Trinidad

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Objectives: To examine the relationship between self-medication with herbal medicine (HM), taking prescribed antihypertensive drugs and the management of hypertension.

Methods: This cross-sectional investigation included 139 hypertensive patients aged 35-64 years who attended five public health facilities in East and Central Trinidad. A questionnaire was used to determine HM use and adherence with prescribed treatment. Data on blood pressure (BP) control and prescribed medications were extracted from medical records. Chi-square tests were used to examine differences between HM users and non-users.

Results: More than half of the patients (59.7%) used HM. The most popular herb was garlic, Allium sativum L (57%). There were no differences between the HM users and nonusers in duration, stage of hypertension, and their prescribed therapy. For the total sample, the mean (standard deviation) duration of hypertension was 10.4 (8.9) years; 20.9%, 48.9% and 30.2% of patients had elevated BP, stage 1 and stage 2 hypertension, respectively; and 70.9% were on co

bination therapy. Antihypertensives included calcium channel blockers (70.1%), ACE inhibitors (46.3%), and angiotensin-II receptor blockers (40.6%). Notably, fewer HM users (15.7%) had controlled BP compared with non-users (30.4%) (p=0.039). There was no difference in compliance with prescribed medication between HM users (60%) and non-users (70.4%) (p=0.219).

Conclusion: Although self-medication with herbal medication to control hypertension is growing worldwide, we found that these users in Trinidad had poorer levels of BP control than non-users. Further research is needed to understand the reasons for this, which could be related to herb drug interaction and/or behavioural factors.