

AWARENESS, KNOWLEDGE AND LIFE STYLE MODIFICATION PRACTICES OF HYPERTENSION AMONG WOMEN.

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Background: Hypertension (HTN) is the fifth highest cause of mortality in females and the seventh highest in men in CARICOM countries with females having higher mortality rates than males. Hypertension is a major contributor to heart diseases which currently is the leading cause of death in both men and women in Trinidad and Tobago and worldwide, while cerebrovascular disease being the fourth leading mortality in the Caribbean including Trinidad and Tobago (Caribbean Epidemiology Centre, 2007; Ministry of Planning and Development; and American Heart Association, 2010).

Objectives: To assess the current awareness, knowledge and practices of life –style modification measures related to hypertension among women in Trinidad.

Methods : A survey of women aged 25 years and over using convenient sampling were conducted from October to November 2010, with 120 respondents ; 46 % Afro Trinidadian, 33% Indo Trinidadian, and 22 % of Mixed ethnicity. A 30–item closed ended questionnaire was incorporated into four sections for evaluating awareness, knowledge, history (family and personal), life style modification, and demographics. The study data was analysis using frequency, cross tabulation and chi squared (X^2) tests. Statistical significance was set at $P<.05$. Data entry and analysis were done using SPSS for windows version 19.

Results: Education attained by women influenced knowledge of risk factors. Majority of women report they were moderately (51%) to not well informed (15%) about hypertension. Less than 37 % identified heart failure and renal disease as complication with untreated hypertension. Sources of information receive from dietitians, nurses, media and printed media were significant

with majority of risk factors identified ($P < .05$), and most dietary and lifestyle practices for prevention or control of hypertension.

Conclusions: The findings suggest women had adequate knowledge of most risk factor and some disease risk regarding hypertension. Sources of information receive by respondents influence their knowledge of risk factors and dietary and lifestyle practices. Education level influenced knowledge to a greater extent than age or ethnicity. The findings reveal that continuous educational interventions amount public and healthcare providers are vital.