

Improvements in blood pressure control prevent hundreds of thousands of major cardiovascular events

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Hypertension (raised blood pressure) treatment rates have almost doubled and control rates have trebled in England between 1994 and 2011, resulting in the saving of tens of thousands of lives each year, according to a new study published in a special themed issue of The Lancet. The issue is published ahead of ahead of Hypertension 2014, the Joint Meeting of the European Society of Hypertension (ESH) and International Society of Hypertension (ISH), to be held in Athens, Greece, June 13-16, 2014.

The findings also suggest that if these improvements in blood pressure management continue until 2022, 80% of patients being treated for [hypertension](#) will have achieved control of their high blood pressure, preventing a further 50 000 major cardiovascular events (eg, strokes, heart attacks, and deaths) in that year.

"Although the rates of diagnosis, [treatment](#), and control of raised blood pressure remain suboptimum in England, our findings are still a cause for optimism", explains study leader Emanuela Falaschetti from Imperial College London in the UK.

"Whereas once the 'rule of halves' prevailed—half the general population with high blood pressure were diagnosed, half of those detected treated, and half of those treated controlled—now management in England is better than the rule of two-thirds. As a result of these

improvements in practice, several hundreds of thousands of major cardiovascular events might have been prevented."

Hypertension (blood pressure 140/90mm Hg or higher) is the single most important risk factor for early death, causing an estimated 9.4 million deaths every year worldwide. Around 30% of people in England have [high blood pressure](#).

Using data from five Health Survey for England surveys (1994, 1998, 2003, 2006, and 2011)—nationally representative samples of adults aged 16 years and older living in private households—the researchers analysed trends in the awareness, treatment, and control of raised blood pressure during the past 17 years.

Encouragingly, the results showed that average blood pressure levels of men and women in the general population have steadily improved between 1994 and 2011, with average systolic blood pressure falling by about 5mm Hg in men and 9mm Hg in women.

Additionally, treatment rates have almost doubled between 1994 and 2011, with 58% of hypertensive adults receiving treatment in 2011. Among those treated, patients keeping their blood pressure under control (

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