

# Doctors' recommendations associated with healthy behaviors among Brazilians with hypertension

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(L to R): Xiayu Summer Chen, Flavia Cristina Drumond Andrade, and Kang Sun. Credit: School of Social Work, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

A new study conducted by researchers from the University of Illinois

Urbana-Champaign sheds light on the impact of doctors' recommendations on healthy behaviors among individuals with hypertension in Brazil. The study, based on data from Brazil's 2019 National Health Survey, investigated the biological, social, and health factors related to doctor's recommendations and their associations with healthy behaviors.

Hypertension, a major risk factor for fatal and debilitating conditions, affects about 24% of Brazilian adults, placing a significant health burden on the nation. Despite efforts to improve health behaviors, [unhealthy habits](#) such as [excessive alcohol consumption](#), sedentary lifestyles, and unhealthy diets remain prevalent among individuals with hypertension.

The study found that more than 80% of people with hypertension in Brazil received doctors' recommendations to adhere to [medical care](#) and engage in [healthy behaviors](#). Recommendations were related to maintaining a healthy diet, weight management, reducing salt intake, regular physical activity, not smoking, not drinking excessively, and having regular follow-ups with a health professional.

Among the key findings were:

- Individuals who received doctors' recommendations were more likely to practice healthy eating and engage in regular exercise.
- Doctor's recommendations were positively associated with regular doctor visits for hypertension monitoring.
- Recommendations for not smoking and not drinking excessively were more frequently provided to those reporting these unhealthy behaviors.
- However, there was a significant gap in receiving recommendations related to not smoking and not drinking excessively.

The study also revealed that individuals with hypertension need more than just a doctor's recommendation to change certain unhealthy behaviors. Factors such as [socioeconomic status](#), access to [private health insurance](#), and mental health were associated with the receipt of doctor's recommendations.

Dr. Flavia Cristina Drumond Andrade, the corresponding author, highlighted the importance of doctors' recommendations in promoting healthy behaviors among individuals with hypertension. "Our research demonstrates the significant role that doctors can play in encouraging positive lifestyle changes. However, we also need to consider the [social context](#) and individual circumstances in fostering long-term behavioral change," said Dr. Andrade.

The researchers emphasize the need for targeted interventions, tailored to various social groups, to effectively promote health behaviors among individuals with hypertension. They suggest incorporating doctor communication and awareness of social inequalities into medical training curricula to improve patient outcomes.

While the study offers valuable insights into the associations between doctors' recommendations and healthy behaviors, the researchers acknowledge the limitations of the cross-sectional design and self-reported data. Further research is warranted to explore how doctors' recommendations influence long-term changes in health behaviors.

The findings of this study hold significant implications for public health policymakers, health care providers, and individuals with hypertension in Brazil. By understanding the dynamics of doctors' recommendations and their impact on healthy behaviors, targeted interventions can be developed to improve hypertension management and overall health outcomes.

**More information:** Kang Sun et al, Doctors' recommendations and healthy lifestyle behaviors among individuals with hypertension in Brazil, *Preventive Medicine Reports* (2023). [DOI: 10.1016/j.pmedr.2023.102315](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pmedr.2023.102315)

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