

Major hypertension risk revealed in Top End First Nations study

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Alarming levels of a major hypertension risk have been found among Indigenous people in Australia's Top End, in a first-of-its-kind study. Associate Professor Jun Yang has previously established that a hormonal

condition called primary aldosteronism (PA) is a significant but frequently undiagnosed cause of high blood pressure (hypertension), however there is no data on PA in Australian First Nations communities.

Thanks to a [collaboration](#) with Prof Gurmeet Singh from Menzies School of Health Research, Dr. Yang and her team were able to test for PA in established cohorts of young people, Australian First Nations communities and non-Indigenous people living in the Northern Territory. Their results are published in the latest edition of the *Medical Journal of Australia*.

A/Prof Yang believes the results were concerning in themselves, but also potentially open a window into broader issues of public health for Australian First Nations people.

"We found positive tests for PA in over a quarter of the urban-residing participants of the Cohort studies who were tested.

"Australian First Nations people are known to have high rates of [hypertension](#) and cardiovascular disease, but this is the first time this type of testing has been done in these communities. PA is a highly modifiable risk factor for [cardiovascular disease](#) and correct identification will enable appropriate targeted treatment."

Compounding cardiovascular risk

Lead author and Ph.D. candidate Dr. Elisabeth Ng said that "The timely detection of [primary aldosteronism](#) is particularly important for Australian First Nations people due to the high rates of heart and kidney diseases, both of which may be associated with having too much aldosterone.

"Targeted treatment to block aldosterone action or remove aldosterone

excess may be a lifesaver."

The next steps are to establish a process of appropriate screening process across the Top End.

More information: Elisabeth Ng et al, Aldosterone and renin concentrations and blood pressure in young Indigenous and non-Indigenous adults in the Northern Territory: a cross-sectional study, *Medical Journal of Australia* (2023). [DOI: 10.5694/mja2.52062](https://doi.org/10.5694/mja2.52062)

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