**SUBCLINICAL DEPRESSION IN A HYPERTENSIVE POPULATION**

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Objectives: To evaluate the presence of subclinical depression in hypertensive patients.

Background: Depression often coexists with hypertension. It has been implicated in the development of hypertension as well as poor compliance with anti-hypertensive medications. This may indirectly increase hypertension related morbidity and mortality. Subclinical depression may evade diagnosis in these patients. This study was done to measure undiagnosed depression in patients with hypertension using the Zung depression scale (ZDS).

Methods: One hundred consecutive hypertensive patients were tested using the ZDS. Patients with known depression were excluded. Scoring was done as follows: 20-49: normal range, 50-59: mildly depressed, 60-69: moderately depressed, 70 and above severely depressed.

Results: Of the 100 (55M, 45F) 'non-depressed' hypertensive patients (ages 18-95 years), 69 (41M, 28F) were normal (ZDS: 49 or less), 30 (14M, 16F) mildly depressed (ZDS: 50-59), 1 (F) moderately depressed (ZDS: 60-69) and 0 severely depressed (ZDS: 70 or above). Of the 31 patients with depression, 30 (97%) suffered from mild depression and 1 (3%) suffered from moderate depression. 14 of the 55 males (25%) were mildly depressed while 16 of the 45 females (36 %) were mildly depressed.

Conclusions: Our study found that almost one third of our 'non-depressed' hypertensive patients were suffering from subclinical depression. Studies are needed to see if these patients progress to overt depression in the future. Further studies are also needed to evaluate the impact of sub-clinical depression on the subsequent development of cardiovascular events. The cardiovascular benefits of treating sub-clinical depression in these patients remains unknown.