

Media Release



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Ambulatory blood pressure monitoring statement released

The National Heart Foundation of Australia, in partnership with the High Blood Pressure Council of Australia, has released a consensus position statement on the role of Ambulatory Blood Pressure Monitoring (ABPM) in Australia.

The statement has been published in the latest issue of the Journal of Hypertension.

“Ambulatory blood pressure monitoring involves measuring blood pressure at regular intervals over a 24hr period while patients undergo normal daily activities,” Dr Robert Grenfell, National Clinical Issues Director of the Heart Foundation, said today.

“It is used to attempt to get a better prediction of the risk of future cardiovascular disease (CVD) events than clinic or occasional blood pressure measurements, which are at risk of being influenced by a patient’s anxiety levels, known colloquially as ‘white coat hypertension’.

“Some people also have episodic hypertension, masked hypertension, labile blood pressure (borderline hypertension) and nocturnal or morning hypertension, which are not always picked up in clinic and occasional measurements.

“Regular readings and a 24-hour average provide more reliable assessment of actual blood pressure than clinic readings which means we are better able to define and manage and abnormal patterns.

“The Heart Foundation’s Guide To Management Of Hypertension 2008 (Updated December 2010) emphasises that the initiation and modification of blood pressure lowering treatment should be related to absolute CVD risk, an analysis of all of a patient’s risk factors.

“An absolute risk approach takes into consideration the age, BMI, and sex of a patient, as well as data about their blood pressure and cholesterol, smoking status and whether they have a family history of heart disease or diabetes.

“There has been some debate about the value of an ABPM approach because the medical community believes very firmly in using an Absolute Risk approach to determine the likelihood of a heart event.

“However, the Heart Foundation believes that this approach provides a tool that can assist in determining if a person’s blood pressure is elevated, where the status is uncertain, which can then be used to identify if treatment is necessary.

“The wider use of ABPM, although justified, is limited by its current availability and cost, which is due in part to the lack of medical subsidy in Australia.

“This needs review through the Medicare benefits schedule,” Dr Grenfell said.

Release of this consensus position statement complements a ‘test and results series’ on ABPM, published in the 2011 Australian Family Physician. The test series outlines practical considerations for health professionals in undertaking the test and interpreting the readings (<http://www.racgp.org.au/afp/201111/44799>).

The Heart Foundation would like to thank the writing group chaired by Professor Geoff Head for its considerable effort in preparing this significant piece of work

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