

SAND abstract No. 26 from the BEACH program 2001–02

Subject: Prevalence of diagnosed hypertension and difficulties in treatment

Organisation supporting this study: AstraZeneca (Australia)

Issues: Prevalence of diagnosed hypertension in general practice and degree of difficulty of treatment; current medication used; medication changes in the past year; previous medications used.

Sample: 2,746 respondents from 93 GPs; collection period: 12/06/2001–16/07/2001.

Method: Detailed in the paper entitled 'SAND Method' on this web site (<http://www.fmrc.org.au/beach.html>).

Summary of results:

The age–sex distribution of patients was similar to the distribution of the total BEACH sample, with the majority (58.9%) being female. Patients aged over 65 years accounted for 26.6% of the sample.

The prevalence of hypertension among the respondents was 23.2% (95% CI: 20.6–25.8). Of the 638 hypertensive patients, 539 had simple hypertension and 99 had complicated hypertension, demonstrating a prevalence of 19.6% for simple hypertension and 3.6% for complicated hypertension. Prevalence did not differ for males, but female patients aged 65 years or more were significantly more likely to have hypertension (53.1%, 95% CI: 43.8–62.4), compared with the overall prevalence.

The GPs stated that it was easy to control the hypertension of 42.8% of patients with simple hypertension but only 5.2% of those with complicated hypertension. They found it difficult or very difficult to control 12.8% of simple and 54.6% of complicated hypertension.

Of the 630 patients with hypertension who answered the questions on medications, only 7.3% were not currently taking any medication, while just over half (54.6%) were taking one medication. The remaining 38.1% were taking two or more medications. Patients with complicated hypertension were taking more medications than those with simple hypertension, and 70.4% of patients with complicated hypertension reported using two or more hypertension medications. The most common current medications were atenolol (10.7% of all current medications), amlodipine (7.1%) and irbesartan (6.9%).

Among the 587 patients who responded to the question about change of medication, over a quarter (27.3%) reported that their hypertension medication/s had been changed in the past 12 months. Change in medication was reported by a quarter (25.8%) of patients with simple hypertension, and almost half of patients (49.4%) with complicated hypertension. Of the 372 previous medications recorded for all patients with hypertension, enalapril maleate was the most common (8.6%). It was followed by irbesartan (7.3%), atenolol (7.3%) and indapamide (6.7%).

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