SELF-MONITORING OF BLOOD PRESSURE AMONG MEDICAL STUDENTS: GAPS IN THE PREVENTION OF CARDIOVASCULAR DISEASES



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INTRODUCTION

Hypertension is a key modifiable risk factor for cardiovascular disease, and according to the WHO, a significant proportion of the adult population with high blood pressure is unaware of their condition due to its asymptomatic nature. Regular blood pressure monitoring is the most accessible tool for primary screening and early diagnosis of this condition. Self-monitoring is particularly important in the presence of a family history of the condition and cardiac symptoms. Being young often leads to a false sense of security regarding the absence of cardiovascular risks, which is why high blood pressure in students often goes unnoticed. For future doctors, the level of self-monitoring forms the basis for developing a culture of prevention, which they will subsequently instil in their patients.



THE AIM of the study was to assess the prevalence of self-monitoring of blood pressure and the level of awareness regarding one's own cardiovascular status amongst students at a medical higher education institution.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

- Anonymous online questionnaire; 80 BSMU students: 57 women (71.3%) and 23 men (28.7%); mean age – 21 years.
- Assessed: family history of cardiovascular disease; BP measurements in the past month; ability to recall the readings; subjective symptoms; awareness of one's own diagnostic status.
- Analysis: descriptive statistics.



38.8% family history of CVD

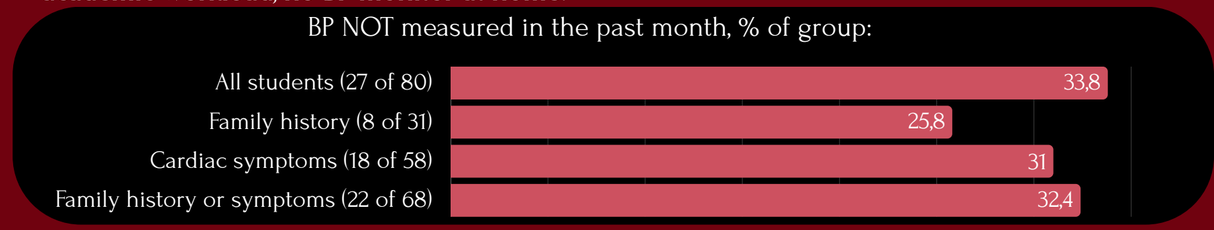
33.8% no BP measurement in the past month

72.5% cardiac symptoms

15% unaware of own diagnostic status

RESULTS

- Family history of cardiovascular disease: 38.8%; a further 11.3% had no information about their relatives' health.
- No BP measurement in the last month: 33.8%, including 25.8% of those in the hereditary risk group.
- 15,1% of all respondents could not recall their BP readings.
- Subjective cardiovascular symptoms: 72.5%; 31% of them had not measured BP during the past month.
- 15% of the sample were unaware of their own diagnostic status.
- No correlation between cardiovascular risk and the regularity of BP monitoring.
- Main reasons for low self-monitoring: perceived lack of need due to young age, heavy academic workload, no BP monitor at home.



CONCLUSION. The study revealed a low level of preventive behaviour among medical students: a third of respondents neglect to monitor their blood pressure even in the presence of a family history of risk or cardiac symptoms. The low quality of blood pressure readings and the lack of knowledge regarding their own diagnosis highlight the need to systematise blood pressure screening during medical examinations at higher education institutions.