Journal of Population Therapeutics & Clinical Pharmacology

RESEARCH ARTICLE
DOI: 10.53555/s24cs449

IMPACT OF LIFESTYLE INTERVENTIONS ON BLOOD PRESSURE MANAGEMENT: INSIGHTS FROM A POPULATION-BASED STUDY

Dr. Chevuri Shyam Prasad[1*], Dr. Rohita Chitithoti[2], Dr. Gayatri Kammila[3]

[1*]Asst. Professor, Dept of General Medicine, NRI Medical College, Mangalgiri, A.P.
[2]Assistant professor, Dept of General Medicine, NRI Medical College, Mangalgiri, A.P.
[3]Assistant professor, Dept of General Medicine, NRI Medical College, Mangalgiri, A.P.

***Corresponding Author:** Dr. Chevuri Shyam Prasad
[*]Asst. Professor, Dept of General Medicine, NRI Medical College, Mangalgiri, A.P.

Abstract

Background: Hypertension is a global health crisis, significantly contributing to cardiovascular disease (CVD) morbidity and mortality. Lifestyle modifications, including dietary changes, regular physical activity, and stress management, are crucial in managing hypertension effectively.

Objective: This study evaluates the impact of lifestyle interventions on blood pressure control among hypertensive individuals in a population-based setting.

Methods: A prospective cohort study enrolled participants diagnosed with hypertension. Tailored interventions, including dietary counseling, exercise promotion, and stress reduction, were delivered over six months. Outcomes were assessed through periodic blood pressure monitoring and behavioral changes.

Results: Significant reductions were observed in systolic (mean reduction: 12.6 mmHg, $p<0.001$) and diastolic (mean reduction: 8.4 mmHg, $p<0.001$) blood pressure levels. Participants exhibited improved weight management, waist circumference reduction, and adherence to DASH dietary patterns ($p<0.001$). Stress management practices and exercise engagement increased by 40% ($p<0.001$).

Conclusion: Lifestyle modifications effectively lower blood pressure and improve cardiovascular health outcomes, emphasizing their role in hypertension management programs.

Keywords: Hypertension, Lifestyle Modifications, Blood Pressure Control, Dietary Interventions, Cardiovascular Risk.

Introduction

Hypertension affects nearly 1.28 billion individuals globally, with only 50% achieving adequate control despite advances in pharmacotherapy [1]. Persistent hypertension is linked to stroke, myocardial infarction, and kidney failure, highlighting the need for holistic management strategies [2]. While antihypertensive medications are pivotal, non-pharmacological approaches, especially lifestyle modifications, form the foundation for sustained blood pressure (BP) control and cardiovascular risk reduction [3,4].

Lifestyle interventions, including the DASH (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension) diet, physical activity, and stress management, have shown efficacy in clinical trials [5]. However,

translating these benefits into real-world settings remains a challenge due to variable adherence and socio-environmental barriers [6-8]. This study investigates the effectiveness of lifestyle interventions in a diverse, population-based cohort to bridge these gaps and provide actionable insights into hypertension management.

Materials and Methods

Study Design

A prospective cohort study was conducted at a tertiary care center, adhering to ethical guidelines and approved by the institutional review board. Written informed consent was obtained from all participants.

Study Population

Inclusion criteria were adults aged 30-70 years with a confirmed hypertension diagnosis (systolic BP ≥140 mmHg or diastolic BP ≥90 mmHg). Participants with secondary hypertension, severe comorbidities, or those undergoing advanced medical therapy were excluded. A total of 600 participants were enrolled.

Baseline Assessment

Baseline assessments included demographic data, medical history, anthropometric measurements (weight, height, BMI, and waist circumference), and lifestyle habits (dietary patterns, physical activity, and smoking status). Blood pressure was measured using automated devices per the American Heart Association guidelines.

Interventions

Tailored lifestyle interventions were delivered through individualized counseling:

1. **Dietary Changes:** Adoption of the DASH diet, emphasizing fruits, vegetables, low-fat dairy, and reduced sodium (<2300 mg/day) [8].
2. **Physical Activity:** Participants were encouraged to engage in at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic exercise weekly [9].
3. **Stress Management:** Mindfulness and relaxation techniques were introduced.
4. **Smoking Cessation:** Support included counseling and nicotine replacement therapy.

Follow-ups were conducted monthly to reinforce adherence and track progress.

Outcome Measures

Primary outcomes were changes in systolic and diastolic blood pressure. Secondary outcomes included weight, waist circumference, and lifestyle adherence. Changes were analyzed using paired t-tests and multivariable regression, adjusting for age, sex, and baseline BP levels.

Results

Baseline Characteristics

The mean age of participants was 55.4 ± 8.6 years, with 53% males. The average BMI was 28.1 ± 3.2 kg/m², indicating a predominantly overweight population. Smoking prevalence included 20% current smokers and 26.7% former smokers. Only 50% engaged in regular physical activity at baseline (Table 1).

Blood Pressure Reduction

Mean systolic BP decreased from 145.2 ± 12.1 mmHg to 132.6 ± 9.8 mmHg ($p<0.001$), while diastolic BP decreased from 90.8 ± 8.3 mmHg to 82.4 ± 6.7 mmHg ($p<0.001$). These reductions align with findings from the PREMIER clinical trial, which highlighted the DASH diet's efficacy in BP control. table 2

Anthropometric Improvements

Participants demonstrated significant weight loss, with an average reduction of 2.2 ± 0.7 kg ($p<0.001$). Waist circumference decreased by 4.4 ± 1.3 cm ($p<0.001$), reflecting reduced abdominal adiposity (Table 3). These results support evidence linking obesity reduction with improved BP outcomes.

Behavioral Changes

Adherence to the DASH diet increased from 30% to 60% ($p<0.001$). Exercise participation rose from 50% to 75% ($p<0.001$), and smoking cessation improved by 20% ($p<0.001$). Stress management practices were adopted by 65% of participants, up from 35% at baseline ($p<0.001$). table 4

Table 1: Baseline Characteristics of Study Population

Characteristic	Mean ± SD or Frequency (%)
Age (years)	55.4 ± 8.6
Gender (Male/Female)	320/280 (53%/47%)
BMI (kg/m²)	28.1 ± 3.2
Smoking Status	
- Current Smokers	120 (20%)
- Former Smokers	160 (26.7%)
- Non-Smokers	320 (53.3%)
Physical Activity Level	
- Sedentary	150 (25%)
- Moderate Activity	320 (53.3%)
- Vigorous Activity	130 (21.7%)
Comorbidities	
- Diabetes	180 (30%)
- Hyperlipidemia	240 (40%)
- Cardiovascular Disease	80 (13.3%)

Table 2: Changes in Blood Pressure Levels Post-Intervention

Parameter	Baseline (Mean ± SD)	Follow-up (Mean ± SD)	p-value
Systolic BP (mmHg)	145.2 ± 12.1	132.6 ± 9.8	<0.001
Diastolic BP (mmHg)	90.8 ± 8.3	82.4 ± 6.7	<0.001

Table 3: Changes in Anthropometric Measures Post-Intervention

Parameter	Baseline (Mean ± SD)	Follow-up (Mean ± SD)	p-value
Weight (kg)	78.5 ± 9.2	76.3 ± 8.5	<0.001
Waist Circumference (cm)	94.6 ± 6.7	90.2 ± 5.9	<0.001
BMI (kg/m²)	28.1 ± 3.2	27.2 ± 2.9	<0.001

Table 4: Lifestyle Habit Changes Post-Intervention

Lifestyle Habit	Baseline (%)	Follow-up (%)	p-value
DASH Diet Adherence	30	60	<0.001
Regular Exercise	50	75	<0.001

Lifestyle Habit	Baseline (%)	Follow-up (%)	p-value
Smoking Cessation	20	40	<0.001
Stress Management	35	65	<0.001

Discussion

This study demonstrates the effectiveness of lifestyle interventions in achieving significant BP reductions and behavioral improvements in a real-world population. The observed systolic BP reduction of 12.6 mmHg and diastolic BP reduction of 8.4 mmHg corroborate findings from controlled studies [10-12].

Dietary Changes: The DASH diet's emphasis on potassium-rich foods and reduced sodium intake is known to reduce vascular resistance, leading to BP improvements [13]. Our findings are consistent with meta-analyses highlighting dietary sodium reduction as a critical intervention [14].

Physical Activity: Regular exercise enhances vascular health by improving endothelial function and reducing arterial stiffness, contributing to BP reductions [15]. Participants who achieved weekly physical activity targets exhibited the greatest BP improvements.

Weight Management: Obesity, a modifiable risk factor for hypertension, was addressed effectively in this study. Weight loss directly correlates with BP reductions, with evidence suggesting a 1 mmHg decrease in systolic BP per kilogram of weight lost [16].

Stress Management: Incorporating mindfulness and relaxation techniques was associated with improved adherence and reduced BP. Chronic stress exacerbates hypertension through neuroendocrine activation, and stress reduction interventions are increasingly recognized for their efficacy [7,12].

Public Health Implications

These results underscore the need for integrated lifestyle modification programs within routine clinical practice. Cost-effective interventions, such as dietary counseling and community-based exercise programs, can enhance accessibility and scalability [1,8]. However, sustained engagement remains challenging due to socio-cultural and logistical barriers.

Study Limitations

While the study provides valuable insights, limitations include its observational design, which precludes causal inference. Self-reported data on dietary and physical activity behaviors may be subject to recall bias. Additionally, the study's focus on a single center limits its generalizability.

Conclusion

Lifestyle modification interventions significantly improve blood pressure control and associated cardiovascular risk factors. These findings emphasize the role of non-pharmacological approaches as a cornerstone in hypertension management. Integrating these strategies into public health policies can mitigate the global hypertension burden and improve health outcomes.

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