

HYPERTENSION SERVICES

CHAPTER 37

The Hypertension Service provides services for three broad categories of patients:

- Patients with renal disease requiring investigation and management up to the point of dialysis. This includes a significant proportion of diabetics;
- Patients with hypertension. This may be for exclusion of 'white coat' hypertension, diagnosis of secondary hypertension or improvement of blood pressure control;
- Pregnant women with hypertension and / or renal disease.

In addition, the service provides education programs for General Practitioners, who have a frontline role in the prevention, detection and management of hypertension in the community. A laboratory service is provided for clinical support and research.

The service has strong links to stroke/neurology, vascular surgery, endocrine surgery and cardiology.

Current Services

Bankstown Hospital

Inpatients are admitted under one of two Staff Specialists (1.3 FTE) for investigation and management, in consultation with disciplines such as radiology, endocrinology and vascular surgery. A consultative service is provided to general hospital inpatients.

Liverpool Hospital

The Hypertension Laboratory is located in the South West Area Pathology Service (SWAPS) building at Liverpool and acts as both a routine service laboratory and a basic research laboratory. The routine service provides assays for renin and aldosterone, for the diagnosis of mineralocorticoid hypertension, which affects 10% of patients with hypertension (approximately 15,000 SWSAHS residents) and assay for ACE activity for diagnosis of sarcoidosis.

Non-inpatient

At Bankstown, three outpatient clinics are conducted: renal clinic, hypertension / vascular risk assessment clinic and hypertension / renal disease in pregnancy clinic. All clinics involve a specialist and a hypertension nurse.

Hypertension / vascular risk assessment clinics are conducted at Liverpool and Fairfield by nursing staff who liaise with a specialist based at Bankstown Hospital for preparation of reports to General Practitioners. Funding for these clinics and associated staff specialist sessions is through the Chronic and Complex Care cardiovascular program.

All clinics provide education for patients about their disease, therapeutic options and patient self-management.

Research and Teaching

The Hypertension Laboratory research program currently includes:

- Mechanisms underlying the development of Salt Sensitive Hypertension;
- Mechanisms causing the development of myocardial fibrosis
- Development of new therapeutic agents for prevention and treatment of myocardial fibrosis.

In addition, clinical research in blood pressure measurement and minerlocorticoid hypertension is undertaken, along with investigations into effective adult education strategies and methods of transferring research to clinical practice. Regular evaluation is undertaken of the service's patient databases to assess performance against benchmarks, such as WHO-ISH blood pressure targets.

Workshop and lecture programs are provided for General Practitioners and General Practice Nurses to improve management of hypertension in the community. A unique feature of the education programs is the discussion of systemic problems identified from analysis of the services' patient databases. CME audit programs for GPs are also designed and applied.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Bankstown Hospital be the Area referral centre for complex hypertension problems.
- Hypertension services be developed as an Area network.
- A uniform approach to the investigation and management of patients be developed in collaboration with the Divisions of General Practice.