

## Scientists study blood pressure in minority ethnic groups

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Scientists at the University of Birmingham are encouraging people from minority ethnic groups to join a research study into blood pressure monitoring.

With hypertension, (high blood pressure) a key risk factor for both coronary heart disease and stroke, cardiovascular experts in the School of Health and Population Sciences are hoping to raise awareness of new methods of monitoring.

In recent years these methods have become increasingly accessible and there is mounting evidence for their use. 'Home' monitoring describes the process of patients taking their own readings using an automated machine while 'ambulatory' monitoring involves wearing a cuff which inflates intermittently over a 24-hour period.

'These methods have some distinct advantages over traditional approaches, such as reducing the 'white coat' effect (whereby patients with apparently raised blood pressure have normal readings when they are repeated away from the medical environment) and being more convenient,' says research lead Professor Richard McManus.

The Blood Pressure in Ethnic Groups study hopes to find out how monitoring methods differ between white and minority ethnic populations, make comparisons between thresholds of diagnosis and management of hypertension and discover which methods of measurement both groups prefer.

Eight thousand people will be sent a two-page questionnaire regarding current blood pressure monitoring habits and health status. All participants will be chosen at random from participating GP surgeries. Anyone who receives a questionnaire is asked to return the completed form to the University, even if they do not wish to take part in the second phase.

From each ethnic group 200 people will be invited into Phase 2 of the study, to have their blood pressure measured at the GP surgery, by themselves and home and by wearing an ambulatory cuff for 24 hours. Participants will need to attend three clinical appointments over ten days. A small number of people will be asked to air their views in a focus group. Findings will be shared with participants' GPs and will be used to inform future health policy.

### Notes to editors

• Participating ethnic groups include South Asian ie. Indian, Pakistani or Bangladeshi origin, Black African-Caribbean, and Irish.

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