Early Heart Disease Found in 9 Out of 10 African Americans With Hypertension

June 14, 2012

A small study conducted in an urban emergency room revealed big findings: More than 90 percent of patients with high blood pressure (a.k.a. hypertension) tested positive for early heart disease—and the vast majority of the patients were African American—according to a study published in the Annals of Emergency Medicine and reported in an American College of Emergency Physicians statement.

For the study, researchers examined 161 patients—almost 94 percent of participants were African American, and 51 percent were male—in a single emergency department in a major city using echocardiograms, an ultrasound test that creates an image of the heart and allows doctors to diagnose heart disease.

The findings? The echocardiograms revealed that more than 90 percent of the participating patients—nearly all of whom were black—had subclinical hypertensive heart disease, a form of early heart disease that can become increasingly fatal if it's not treated and monitored. In addition, the majority of participants diagnosed with early heart disease also had diastolic dysfunction—a heart with impaired ability to pump blood to the brain, body and lungs.

Turns out, this discovery is good news because it gives doctors the ability to detect heart disease early in hypertensive patients. "These results present a tremendous opportunity to screen for heart disease before it becomes symptomatic, especially in a population with high rates of hypertension," said Phillip Levy, MD, MPH, a doctor in the department of emergency medicine at Wayne State University in Detroit. Levy added that emergency room physicians are in a unique position to screen for heart disease in hypertension patients because blood pressure readings are routinely taken for every ER patient.

What's more, this additional heart disease screening would also minimize secondary health problems that affect people with chronic high blood pressure. These screenings would benefit not just African Americans generally, but also other at-risk racial and ethnic groups with high hypertension rates, Levy said.

Click here to read about heart disease and signs of heart attack.

© 2026 Smart + Strong All Rights Reserved.
http://beta.docker.realhealthmag.com/article/hypertension-heart-disease-22552-7268