



## What is the incidence of paediatric hypertension in South Africa?

**To the Editor:** In 2006, I wanted to find out the prevalence of hypertension in the paediatric population at my satellite practice in Alexandra, Johannesburg. I examined 49 children (12 males and 37 females), aged between 7 and 16. I measured their blood pressure (BP) with a validated electronic BP machine, after each patient had rested for at least 5 minutes. This BP was then compared with the US normative BP tables. Patients with a BP above the 95th percentile for age, height and gender were regarded as hypertensive. Eight patients were found to be hypertensive, which gave a worrying prevalence of 16%.

Literature searches revealed prevalences of 3.3% in Poland,<sup>1</sup> 4.2% in Italy<sup>2</sup> and 9.1% in Seychelles.<sup>3</sup> These results were from much larger numbers of patients, and most were based on multiple BP readings. The authors all used the same criteria to determine hypertension.

There is a low level of routine BP monitoring of children worldwide, and the prevalence of hypertension in this age group varies. We need a study of the paediatric population



of South Africa to determine the true prevalence of paediatric hypertension in this country, and to determine its correlation with increased body mass index. Until one is published, I believe it is critically important to educate GPs on the US normative BP tables, and encourage doctors and families to be on the lookout for this controllable condition.

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April 2008, Vol. 98, No. 4 **SAMJ**