

Blood Pressure Drugs May Do More Harm Than Good!

The potential benefits of taking medication to lower high blood pressure (antihypertensive) may not outweigh their negative effects on the quality of life for some patients, reports a study funded in part by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Agency for Health Care Policy and Research.

Side effects of these medications include fatigue, weakness, headache, joint and stomach aches, nausea, impotence, and urinary tract problems. Often, the reduction in blood pressure was not significant for some patients, despite the numerous side effects caused by the drugs.

Researchers from the University of Wisconsin at Madison interviewed 1,430 randomly selected adults 45 to 89 years old. They obtained medical histories and measured the subjects' health status using a variety of measures and self reports.

Of those interviewed, 519 reported being affected by hypertension for more than three years. Persons with hypertension scored lower on the "overall health" test than those whose blood pressure was normal.

But, of the people with high blood pressure, those taking increasing numbers of antihypertensive drugs scored the lowest of all.

SOURCE: "Health status and hypertension: A population-based study," by William F. Lawrence, M.D., M.S.; Dennis G. Fryback, PILD.; Patricia A. Martin, M.A., and others. *Journal of Clinical Epidemiology*, November 1996.