

## PRO-D7

# Illness Perception among Hypertensive Patients Attending polyclinics in Kuching, Sarawak

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**Introduction:** The prevalence of hypertension is increasing worldwide and knowledge on patient's perception may have an impact in compliance to treatment.

**Materials and Methods:** In order to assess the perception of illness among hypertensive patients, a cross-sectional study was conducted among those attending the three main polyclinics in Kuching. A total of 150 hypertensive patients were randomly selected. A revised version of the Illness Perception Questionnaire (IPQ-R) was used. The IPQ-R measures perception based on timeline, emotional control, consequences, personal control, treatment, cyclical nature of hypertension and identity. Only 100 patients completed and returned the questionnaires.

**Results:** There were 59 females and 41 males. Of those, 30 were Malays, 42 Chinese and 28 comprised of other ethnic groups (Iban, Bidayuh, Melanau). The mean age was 58.3 ( $\pm 10.03$ ) years, and the mean duration of hypertension was 10.2 ( $\pm 7.33$ ) years. Most of the patients (97%) were on medication, with 43% on combined anti-hypertensives. Positive personal control was noted to be higher among females ( $\chi^2 = 4.98$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = 0.026$ ), and was also higher among housewives ( $\chi^2 = 14.02$ ,  $df = 3$ ,  $p = 0.003$ ). The housewives were also shown to be better able to identify their symptoms of hypertension ( $\chi^2 = 8.48$ ,  $df = 3$ ,  $p = 0.037$ ). For treatment, more males had a negative notion that they will be able to control their hypertension ( $\chi^2 = 5.25$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = 0.022$ ). In comparing the ethnic groups, the Malays were less likely to perceive the chronicity of their disease ( $\chi^2 = 8.33$ ,  $df = 2$ ,  $p = 0.016$ ).

**Discussion:** A total of 34% of the respondents were able to associate their symptoms with hypertension. This is consistent with another study which showed that 34.6% of subjects were aware of their hypertension (Rampal et al. 2007). Beliefs in well-being and subjective identification of symptoms have been shown to affect compliance and adherence to medication (Jolles et al. 2013). Furthermore, 47% of the respondents had positive personal control of their hypertension, and this was noted to be higher among females, particularly the housewives. Beliefs in personal ability to control illness have been shown to be a good predictive factor for compliance to medication (Ross et al. 2004).

**Conclusion:** Results of this study may have implications on the compliance of hypertensive patients to treatment and coping strategies in managing their illness.

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**Keywords:** hypertension, illness perception, Revised Illness Perception Questionnaire (IPQ-R)