



The report concludes that, while high blood pressure already affects one in four adults globally, by the year 2025 it is likely to affect 1.56 billion people.<sup>1,2</sup> Cardiovascular disease, largely a consequence of uncontrolled high blood pressure, accounts for more than 30% of deaths worldwide.<sup>2</sup> Since high blood pressure is a leading modifiable risk factor for premature death and disability, the authors argue that it is essential to take steps now to avert this mounting health crisis.

The report flags the need to improve current management of high blood pressure in Europe. A recent study shows that people diagnosed with high blood pressure in North America have lower blood pressure and better blood pressure control than those diagnosed in Western Europe, potentially as a result of lower treatment thresholds and more aggressive treatment in North America.<sup>3</sup> Also highlighted is the need to drive adherence to therapy. Poor patient adherence to recommended lifestyle changes and prescribed medication has been identified as the main cause of failure to control high blood pressure; research suggests that over 50% of patients do not take all of their prescribed high blood pressure medicines.<sup>4,5</sup>

The report also notes that increased emphasis on addressing lifestyle factors such as smoking, high-salt and high-fat diets, excessive alcohol intake and obesity require immediate attention by the entire global community.

Dr Jan Östergren, Karolinska Institute, explains "European public health officials are only now beginning to realise that we need to do a better job at reducing cardiovascular health risks and that controlling high blood pressure is a key means for doing this. The problem is also especially worrying in Eastern Europe and the rapidly westernising nations of the Middle East, Asia, Latin America and Africa. Uncontrolled high blood pressure is a public health dilemma that requires an urgent global and national response."

High blood pressure is a serious chronic condition which damages peoples' hearts, eyes, brains and kidneys. It leads to cardiovascular disease, kidney disease and stroke, all of which are associated with a high risk of disabling conditions and mortality. At present high blood pressure causes an estimated 7.1 million deaths from cardiovascular disease each year.<sup>6</sup>

High blood pressure is one of the foremost risk factors that contribute to chronic disabling conditions in people of 50 years and over.<sup>7</sup> Blood-pressure related conditions, including dementia in the elderly, also increase the demand for long-term medical and residential care, which has serious implications on government spending and infrastructure needs within individual healthcare systems.

Improved management of high blood pressure is highly achievable through the use of better education, treatment strategies and new medications. If the commitment to strengthen the control of high blood pressure is not made, this report shows that its socio-economic and individual health consequences could destroy lives, families and burden health budgets unnecessarily.

## **About the Report**

The authors, Dr Panos Kanavos, The London School of Economics, London, UK, Dr Jan Östergren, Karolinska University Hospital, Stockholm, Sweden, and Dr Michael A. Weber, State University New York Downstate Medical College, New York, USA are global leaders in health economics and treating high blood pressure, respectively.

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The report's Call to Action and Recommendations are endorsed by: American Society of Hypertension, Asian Hypertension League, International Council of Nurses, International Diabetes Federation Europe, International Federation of Kidney Foundations, International Society of Nephrology, National Kidney Foundation, World Hypertension League, World Stroke Organization, incorporating the World Stroke Federation and the International Stroke Society and Dr Georgs Andrejevs, MEP, and supported by: European Society of Hypertension and International Society of Hypertension.

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