

Hypertension epidemic in India

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Context- India is facing a massive hypertension epidemic with 200 million individuals affected and a high prevalence of diabetes. The Union health ministry recently launched the 75/25 plan to bring 75 million hypertensive and diabetic populations under standard care by 2025, making the largest effort in the world against Non-communicable diseases (NCDs).

What is Hypertension?

- Hypertension is characterized by abnormally high blood pressure that exerts excessive force on the artery walls.
- It is typically defined as blood pressure above 14/90 with severe cases exceeding 180/120.

Symptoms

- Although often symptomless, people with very high blood pressure can experience severe headaches, chest pain, dizziness, difficulty breathing, nausea, vomiting, blurred vision or vision changes, anxiety, buzzing in the ears, nosebleeds and abnormal heart rhythm.

Mortality

- Only 12% of India's estimated 200 million hypertensive individuals have their blood pressure under control, highlighting the critical care needed for effective treatment.
- Hypertension is the leading cause of adult deaths, placing strain on the heart and causing thickening of the left ventricle. This significantly raises the risk of heart attack,

heart failure and sudden cardiac death.

Why are Indians more susceptible?

- Multiple factors including the sodium-rich Indian diet, genetic predisposition, socioeconomic factors and lifestyle choices influence India's high prevalence of hypertension. Studies indicate that nearly 30% of the Indian Population is affected by hypertension emphasizing its significant health impact

Young Indian in the Hypertension vortex

- Hypertension is increasing among young adults in India with a prevalence running from 10% to 30% as reported by healthcare professionals. Risk factors such as obesity, smoking, mental stress contribute to the concerning trend.

Awareness

- Despite the high prevalence of hypertension in India, awareness and treatment levels are low. Approximately 33% of urban and 25% of rural Indians have hypertension, but only a quarter of the rural patients and around 42% of urban Indians are aware of their conditions.
- Treatment rates are suboptimal, with only 25% of rural and 38% urban Indians receiving treatments.
- Many individuals are unaware of the strain on their hearts due to inadequate condition management.

Initiatives

- India aims to address the hypertension problem by 2025 through the India Hypertension Control Initiative (IHCI).
- The government plans to reach 75 million people with hypertension and has begun training primary healthcare professionals. They also can use the Sashakt portal to improve screening, diagnosis and treatments rates.

Way forward

Collaboration among healthcare providers, policy makers, community organizations and individuals is crucial for promoting a healthy lifestyle and managing hypertension effectively.