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Standardizing skills for taking the pressure off

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Blood pressure (BP) is one of the vital indicators of an individual's health and an independent risk factor for cardiovascular and renal disease. Hypertension is one of the most frequent conditions treated in primary practice, and accounts for 51% of stroke deaths and 45% of ischemic heart disease deaths, while hypotension may be an early symptom alerting a change in the patient's health. Increasingly busy clinical environments raise the risk that accurate BP measurement may be overlooked; this is a problem identified across health services nationally and internationally and not unique to a single health discipline. Health professionals must therefore be able to implement best practice procedures for accurately measuring and acting appropriately upon these measures to ensure patient safety and management. An initial random audit of 23 clinical wards and outpatient clinics identified more digital than manual BP monitors in use with only 17% sites having annual in-service training for measurement of BP and only 50% of medical students (Stage 1 and 2) retaining BP measurement skills. Busy clinical environments require multimedia technology and hence we developed an e-learning module that would be accessible and available for self-directed learning. For the platform to have active engagement and sustainability requires a multi-disciplinary approach. The strategy involved extensive consultation with stakeholders that included health professionals, patients and students to identify challenges encountered both in the clinic and as part of the learning experience, so that program content was not only consistent and accurate but also relevant. Advantages include distance-learning, flexible scheduling with immediate access to content at any time without limitations of access to facilities, easy access from any multimedia device and easily updated to include the latest best practice information. Our goal is that health professionals will have improved knowledge of the limitations of different devices and use standardized procedures for BP measurement, which will provide excellence in patient care.

Biography

Anastasia Susie Mihailidou is Head of the Cardiovascular & Hormonal Research Laboratory and Director of the Ambulatory Blood Pressure Service, Cardiology Department, Royal North Shore Hospital and also Clinical Senior Lecturer, Sydney Medical School, The University of Sydney. Anastasia is a Fellow of the American Heart Association (AHA) and has both clinical and basic research interests into hypertension, diabetes and regulation of aldosterone/mineralocorticoid receptors in the heart. Her research has made a significant contribution to understanding the role of corticosteroid hormones (and antagonists) in the heart. As a clinical scientist, she was a member of the High Blood Pressure Research Council of Australia (HBPRCA) and National Heart Foundation Ambulatory Blood Pressure (ABP) Working Group which revised the Australian Guidelines for ABP monitoring.

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