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High blood pressure puts one in four Nigerians at risk, study says

High blood pressure – already a massive hidden killer in Nigeria – is set to sharply rise as the country adopts western lifestyles, a study suggests.

Researchers who conducted the first up-to-date nationwide estimate of the condition in Nigeria warn that this will strain the country's already-stretched health system.

Increased public awareness, lifestyle changes, screening and early detection are vital to tackle the increasing threat of the disease, they say.

High blood pressure – also known as hypertension – is twice as high in Nigeria compared with some East African countries and less than 20 per cent of Nigerians are aware that they have the condition. Hypertension puts people at risk of heart disease, kidney disease and stroke.

Researchers estimated that there were more than 20 million cases of hypertension in Nigeria in 2010, affecting one in-three men and one-in-four women. This is set to rise to 39 million cases by 2030. Data from South Africa suggests that high blood pressure is treated effectively in less than 10 per cent of cases.

Scientists at the University of Edinburgh, who carried out the study, say that understanding of hypertension in Nigeria and other African countries has been affected by lack of patient data.

Their findings have been published in the *Journal of Hypertension*.

Dr Davies Adeloje, of the University of Edinburgh's Centre for Population Health Sciences, said: "We have conducted a systematic search of high quality studies on hypertension across Nigeria and provided estimates of the prevalence and number of cases of hypertension in the country. We hope this will prompt appropriate policy response in the health sector."

A full copy of the research paper can be accessed at:

<http://journals.lww.com/jhypertension/toc/publishahead>

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