

Tip 25 (June 2015)

More on 24-Hour Ambulatory Blood Pressure Monitoring.

See Tips 24 (December 2014) and 8 (November 2009) for previous comments on 24-hour ambulatory blood pressure monitoring.

For several years now, the Canadian¹ and British² hypertension societies have been recommending 24-hour ambulatory blood pressure monitoring (24-h ABPM) to make the diagnosis of hypertension. This is based on the unreliability of office blood pressure measurement^{3,4,5}, and also a mounting body of evidence that average ambulatory blood pressure is now a more accurate predictor of cardiovascular risk than average office blood pressure⁵.

The Americans have been a little slow to adopt a recommendation for widespread use of ABPM in the diagnosis of hypertension. This has probably been more due to reimbursement than clinical considerations⁴. However, the evidence is now overwhelming⁵, and the US Preventive Services Task Force has produced a draft recommendation statement entitled “Hypertension in Adults: Screening and Home Monitoring”⁶ in which 24-h ABPM is recommended for the confirmation of a diagnosis of hypertension, except individuals presenting with severe or accelerated hypertension (where immediate treatment is mandated).

The bottom line is that, in my view, 24-h ABPM is now the standard of care in the diagnosis of hypertension, and I strongly recommend you offer this to patient prior to committing them to a lifetime of treatment.

1. <https://www.hypertension.ca/en/chep>
2. <http://www.bhsoc.org/latest-guidelines/sub-page-11/>
3. O’Brien E, Dolan E, Atkins N. Failure to provide ABPM to all hypertensive patients amounts to medical ineptitude. J.Clin.Hypertens (early on-line publication arch 2015)
4. Cohen DL, Townsend R. Should all patients have ambulatory blood pressure monitoring performed to validate the diagnosis of hypertension? J.Clin.Hypertens.2015;17;412-413.
5. Piper MA et al. Diagnostic and predictive accuracy of blood pressure screening methods with consideration of rescreening intervals: A systematic review for the US Preventive Services Task Force. Ann.Intern.Med.2015;162:192-205
6. <http://www.uspreventiveservicestaskforce.org/Page/Document/RecommendationStatementDraft/hypertension-in-adults-screening-and-home-monitoring>