



Blood pressure rising in young adults

By Dan Glickman, staff writer

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provider that they had it, according to the news release. As the counties' reports on their high blood pressure rate were based on whether the individual had been told by a doctor that they had hypertension, this could indicate that the rates could be up to double those reported.

Although not familiar with the study, first published May 23 in the journal *Epidemiology*, Beer did not seem surprised by the findings.

"Some of the rise in hypertension is related to the increase of overweight and obesity in our society," she said.

Obesity, especially in younger people, has risen in the Rochester area over the past decades, much as it has across the country. Monroe County saw the obesity rate amongst people between 18 and 34 jump from 15 to 19 percent between 2000 and 2006, for example. Ontario County's obesity rate is 21 percent.

The same trend has been occurring nationwide. When the UNC study began in 1995, 11 percent of the participants were obese. Five years later, 22 percent were. By the time the blood pressure data were taken, three years ago, 37 percent were obese and 60 percent were overweight.

Even if one is not overweight, however, Beer noted that a person might still be at risk, because blood pressure is also partially determined by genetics.

"Certainly in some populations it is more common on genetic levels," she said, later adding that "Some studies show, for example, that it is more common in African American communities."

To head off hypertension, Beer recommends that people maintain a "healthy diet (and) healthy weight," along with good nutrition and regular checkups.

Back at UNC, Harris urged early action against hypertension and its causes.

"If we can intervene early in life to reduce risk," she said, "we will avoid health problems for millions of people."

Scripps Howard News Service/The Raleigh News and Observer contributed to this report

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MPNnow.com — What has been described as a "sleeping epidemic" may be slumbering in western New York as well.

A recent study, from the University of North Carolina, indicates that nearly one out of every five young adults ages 24-32 have high blood pressure, also known as hypertension, putting them at a greater risk for issues such as heart disease, according to a UNC news release. This rate would be nearly five times that of an earlier study.

"A prevalence of 19 percent (of young adults) with high blood pressure is alarming, especially since more than half did not know that they had high blood pressure," said Kathleen Mullan Harris, co-author of the paper and interim director at the UNC Carolina Population Center.

At first glance, the statistics of two of the area's larger counties would seem to indicate that there might not be as much reason for alarm closer to home, at least comparatively. In Monroe County, for example, the 2006 "Adult Health Survey Report" showed that 10 percent of adults between 18 and 30 had said they had been told they had high blood pressure at some point in the past. The rate in Ontario County, according to the county's "2010-13 Community Health Assessment," was so small that the age group was marked as not having enough sufficient data to report. When including all age groups, the percentage goes up further to a far more troubling 32 percent in both Monroe and Ontario. Mary Beer, the Public Health Director of Ontario County, put her thoughts in words, not numbers:

"Hypertension certainly is a problem in our community," she said.

However, if the findings of the UNC study were to hold true, it could be an even bigger problem, as the rate of hypertension could be much higher than the county studies indicate. Only about half of the people who tested for high blood pressure in the UNC study said they had been told by a health-care provider that they had it, according to the news release. As the counties' reports on their high blood pressure rate were based on whether the individual had been told by a doctor that they had hypertension, this could indicate that the rates could be up to double those reported.

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