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Control of blood pressure and risk of mortality in a cohort of older adults: the Berlin Initiative Study

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This prospective cohort study aimed to assess whether blood pressure control is beneficial in older hypertensive patients. It involved some 1,600 patients over the age of seventy treated with antihypertensive drugs and followed for an average of 6 years. All patients were participants in the population-based Berlin Initiative Study, which was initiated in 2009 in Berlin, Germany. The study concluded that blood pressure below 140/90 mmHg, which is slightly higher than the treatment goal recommended by the American College of Cardiology and the American Heart Association, was associated with an increased risk of mortality compared to blood pressure 140/90 mmHg or higher. The increase in the risk was driven by patients over the age of eighty or with previous cardiovascular events. The results of this study contradict those of the few randomized trials in the area. However, these trials included highly selected populations and the generalizability of their results may be limited, especially regarding frail elderly patients. Overall, the paper argues for a personalized approach to treatment, rather than a blanket approach aiming at a single optimal blood pressure for everyone.

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