

GPAC guideline: Hypertension—Diagnosis and Management

The Guidelines and Protocols Advisory Committee's (GPAC) guideline for Hypertension—Diagnosis and Management provides recommendations on how to diagnose and manage hypertension (HTN) in adults aged ≥ 19 years and is available to physicians across British Columbia via BCGuidelines.ca.

Key recommendations:

- 140/90 or lower is the desirable blood pressure reading for an adult with no comorbid conditions, diabetes, chronic kidney disease, or other target organ damage.
- When taking office blood pressure readings, the use of an automated office blood pressure measuring electronic device is recommended.

- Consider 24-hour ambulatory blood pressure monitoring or home blood pressure monitoring to confirm a hypertension diagnosis.
- Instigate pharmaceutical management in the context of the patient's overall cardiovascular risk and not solely on their blood pressure.
- Lifestyle management is recommended for those with mild hypertension (average blood pressure = 140 – 159/90 – 99), low risk for cardiovascular disease, and no comorbidities.

Canada's aging population and economic environment: Impacts on insurance

According to Statistics Canada, Canada's population is aging. The average age of Canadians will increase to 42.2 in 2021 (up from 39.9 in 2011). An older population will pay higher

rates for life insurance and long-term disability insurance. A 1-year increase in the average age of a group is estimated to result in a 5% to 10% rise in insurance rates.

The cost of health care is also on the rise due to our aging population, and governments must either raise taxes or cut costs to deal with rising health care spending. Cutting costs includes delisting some health services that are currently covered by government and pushing the coverage for those services to private health care insurance plans, thereby driving up costs for those plans.

In addition, declining interest rates affect an insurance company's profitability and the cost of insurance. The Bank of Canada's lending rate has been trending at less than 1% in order to stimulate growth. This is bad news for Canada's insurance industry, as insurance companies rely on investment interest to bolster profits. Revenues from insurance premiums are invested in bonds, and the interest generated from these bonds goes to cover the costs of claims, liabilities, and other administrative expenses. The funds left over translate into insurance company profits. Due to the low interest rate environment, these profits are down, forcing insurance companies to charge higher premiums.

We can expect to see rising premium rates in the next decade due to these demographic changes, health-care cost increases, delisted services, and declining insurer profits.

The good news: Doctors of BC members have access to exclusive insurance plans, where premium costs are monitored closely by an Insurance Committee made up of physicians. These plans are exclusively designed for and competitively priced to meet the needs of physicians. For information on available plans and to meet with one of our in-house advisors,

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—**Kim Pelletier, CEBS**
Insurance Program Manager

Study: Seeking stroke participants

A multidisciplinary team at Vancouver General Hospital (VGH) is studying the role that hyperbaric oxygen therapy (HBOT) could play in improving neurological function in patients who are 6 to 36 months post-ischemic stroke. Researchers will measure several primary and secondary outcomes in the study—including neurological function, daily living activities, quality of life scores, depression, and cognition.

Dr David Harrison, medical manager of the Hyperbaric Unit at VGH and a VCH Research Institute researcher, is the study's lead investigator. He and his team are actively recruiting 140 participants between the ages of 19 and 85 who have had a stroke involving the cerebral hemispheres during the past 6 to 36 months.

Participants will receive a series of 40 treatments in the hyperbaric oxygen chamber at VGH. Treatment involves breathing 100% oxygen at increased pressures inside an airtight, cylindrical steel chamber. This allows oxygen to be dissolved into the bloodstream and carried to the organs. Study participants will receive one of two treatments, each with a different environment pressure and oxygen level. Preliminary results are expected in December 2018.

To learn more about the study visit: www.vchri.ca/clinical-trials/hyperbaric-oxygen-post-established-stroke-hopes.

Sign up for Walk With Your Doc

Walk With Your Doc is an annual fun and simple way to get your patients moving, and to discuss the benefits of daily activity with them in an infor-

mal and social setting. Join the Vancouver kickoff walk taking place on Saturday, 7 May, or join hundreds of other doctors across BC and host a Walk With Your Doc event in your community during the week of 7–14 May. Doctors of BC will provide support and materials to make it as easy as possible every step of the way. Register your local walk at walkwithyourdoc.ca or sign up to join the Vancouver kickoff walk.

BCMJ writing prize winner: Ms Kristel Leung

The *BCMJ* is pleased to announce the winner of the 2015 J.H. MacDermot Prize for Excellence in Medical Journalism for the best article or essay by a student author: Ms Kristel Leung of the UBC Medicine Class of 2016. Ms Leung won for her evocative story of cherished relationships and life's difficult moments, "A Final Bargain" (*BCMJ* 2015;57:158-159).

Among many interests Ms Leung enjoys storytelling, drawing inspiration from her experiences in and out of the medical world, and endeavors to spark conversation and connect readers through her writing. In her spare time she also enjoys biking, photography, and playing board games. Ms Leung will be graduating from UBC's Vancouver Fraser program and will embark on the next stage of her training with the Internal Medicine program at the University of Ottawa.



Ms Kristel Leung won the prize for her story "A final bargain"

The \$1000 MacDermot prize recognizes a BC medical student's significant achievement in medical writing (article or essay) and honors Dr John Henry MacDermot (1883–1969), a former editor of the *Vancouver Medical Bulletin* and the *BC Medical Journal*, and a past president of both the Vancouver Medical Association and the then-BCMA.

The *BCMJ* welcomes submissions from student authors, and awards writing prizes for the best BC med student submissions accepted for publication. BC medical students are encouraged to submit everything from full-length scientific articles, essays, and blog posts to humor, reflections, or criticism in order to experience the challenges and rewards of medical publishing. For more information about the awards, past winners, and how to submit content to the *BCMJ*, visit bcmj.org/jh-macdermot-writing-awards.



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