

Therapy of hypertension

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Hypertension is a major risk factor for the development of cardiovascular diseases such as stroke, myocardial infarction, heart and renal failure. Antihypertensive therapy prevents to a large extent the occurrence of these complications. It is therefore mandatory to screen actively, the population for the patients with abnormally high blood pressure. The diagnosis of hypertension should be based on repeated measurements. A number of patients may have their blood pressure normalized by non pharmacological approaches (reduction of salt and alcohol consumption, decrease in body weight in obese patients, regular physical exercise). When required, drugs have to

be administered. For many years, diuretics, beta-blockers and methyldopa were the drugs of choice for initiating treatment. The use of angiotensin converting enzyme inhibitors and calcium antagonists can now also be considered. Diuretics increase the antihypertensive efficacy of all classes of agents. They are for this reason, very helpful when a combined therapy is needed. It is important to search for associated risk factors (diabetes, hypercholesterolemia, cigarette smoking) in each hypertensive patient. It should be attempted to take care of all risk factors in order to optimally prevent cardiovascular disorders.