We compared blood pressure control rates according to Joint National Committee on Hypertension (JNC VI) and Healthcare Employer Data Information Sheet (HEDIS) guidelines in a primary care ambulatory managed care population. Retrospective chart review was conducted in randomly sampled hypertensive patients seen during 1998. Computerized medical and pharmacy records were reviewed for patient demographics, antihypertensive medication, comorbid conditions and blood pressure readings. Patient assessment was based on antihypertensive regimen and achievement of blood pressure target according to the recommendations of JNC VI (<140/90 for low risk individuals and <130/85 for high risk) and using traditional HEDIS measures for blood pressure control (<140/90 mmHg). The mean age of the patients was 62 years and 44% were males. About 30% of the population were high risk hypertensives due to the presence of diabetes. Overall, 41% of all hypertensive patients achieved blood pressure targets based HEDIS criteria. Using the more stringent JNC VI targets, control rates decreased to 35%, while 68% of patients were treated with agents consistent with JNC VI recommendations. Only 13% of the high risk patients were controlled (<130/85) despite the fact that 67% were treated with recommended agents.

Conclusion: Using HEDIS criteria to evaluate all hypertensive patients does not recognize sub-optimal treatment of high risk diabetic patients. The growing size of this population mandates more careful scrutiny of care patterns using JNC VI guidelines.

Key Words: high risk populations, HEDIS criteria, JNC guidelines