Letter to the Editor

DEFINITION OF HYPERTENSION FOR THE “OLD-OLD”

To the Editor:

In the article “Prevalence, awareness, and management of hypertension, dyslipidemia, and diabetes among United States adults aged 65 and older,” table 1 indicated that those aged older than 85 years were 9.5% (% weighted) (1). However, the authors used the definition of hypertension systolic blood pressure greater than 140 mmHg and diastolic blood pressure greater than 90 mmHg (2). A Swedish study of blood pressure in the very old showed that systolic blood pressure, diastolic blood pressure, and pulse pressure were all inversely associated with 4-year mortality, with systolic blood pressure being the strongest predictor. The systolic blood pressure associated with the lowest mortality was 164 mmHg (95% confidence interval, 154–184 mmHg) (3). A recent study indicated that the beneficial effects associated with lower blood pressure for a common age-related outcome, dementia, apparently restricted to persons younger than age 75 years (4). I have previously stated that levels of treatment for hypertension in patients older than 85 years should be raised and that clinicians, at the least, should be cautious in prescribing antihypertensive medication in this group of the oldest old (5).

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References