

No more hypertension

2011/09/16

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KUALA LUMPUR: A new catheter-based procedure to treat resistant hypertension, said to be the first in Asia, was unveiled by the National Heart Institute (IJN) yesterday.

The radio ablation (current produced by radio waves to heat nerve tissues) procedure was used on six patients with high blood pressure who had been on three or more anti-hypertensive medications. The procedure lasted about 45 minutes.

IJN chief executive officer Tan Sri Dr Robaayah Zambahari said the treatment blocked overfunctioning nerves and permanently lowered blood pressure.

"A renal denervation (interruption of the nerve connection to an organ) is performed in which nerves along the renal artery of both kidneys are selected and disabled within the sympathetic nervous system," she said.

IJN consultant cardiologist and electrophysiologist Dr Azlan Hussin said a catheter (tube) was inserted into the renal artery from a puncture made slightly below the hip and four to six nerve points were burnt.

"After sedation, the catheter supplied a low energy of eight watts for two minutes on each nerve point from a connected generator and modified the points."

Dr Azlan said the six patients tested last Wednesday were all above the age of 70 and diabetic.

"This procedure is in its infancy and a team of experts is tracking its developments for potential uses in other diseases as well."

Cyberjaya University College of Medical Sciences (CUCMS) professor of medicine Dr Abdul Rashid Abdul Rahman said the patients underwent a strict selection process.

"Candidates would be between 18 and 85 years of age, diagnosed with resistant hypertension although on medication and should possess functioning kidneys."

He said a single-day screening was held for each patient completed with a questionnaire.

"Unstable patients, pregnant women or children below 18 are not suitable for this procedure."

Through the newly launched IJN's resistant hypertension clinic, a collaborative effort between IJN Cardiology Department and CUCMS, suitable patients would be screened for the renal denervation therapy.

A Facebook page on the IJN clinic has been created for the public to understand the importance of blood pressure control and queries would be answered by IJN staff.

In the past, the standard treatment for hypertension was based on a combination of medications and a healthy lifestyle, including a balanced diet and exercise.

This new therapy has managed to bring a persistent reduction in blood pressure for up to 24 months.

This method has been offered to 1,500 patients worldwide.

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