Anthropometric Assessment of Obesity and Blood Pressure Control in Patients with Hypertension attending the Family Medicine Clinics of Irrua Specialist Teaching Hospital, Irrua Nigeria.

Tijani Idris Ahmad Oseni (tijanioseni@aauekpoma.edu.ng)
Ambrose Alli University

Sulaiman Dazumi Ahmed
Irrua Specialist Teaching Hospital

Afiong Oboko Oku
University of Calabar

Yekeen Ayodele Ayoola
Gombe State University

Ndifreke Ekpo Udonwa
University of Calabar

Research Article

Keywords: waist height ratio, waist hip ratio, body mass index, hypertension, anthropometric assessment

Posted Date: September 13th, 2023

DOI: https://doi.org/10.21203/rs.3.rs-3312758/v1

Abstract

Introduction:

Obesity can be a major problem due to its potential to cause a number of health issues, including high blood pressure, diabetes and other cardiovascular diseases. This study aimed to evaluate the association between obesity as assessed by body mass index (BMI), waist hip ratio (WHR) and waist height ratio (WHtR) and blood pressure control among patients with hypertension attending the Family Medicine Clinics of Irrua Specialist Teaching Hospital, Irrua, a semi-urban community in Edo State, southern Nigeria.

Methods

This was a cross-sectional study among 250 patients with hypertension attending the Family clinics of Irrua specialist Teaching hospital, aged 18 to 65 years. The anthropometric indices of consenting participants, including BMI, WHR, and WHtR were evaluated and blood pressure determined. Data was analysed using statistical package of Social Sciences version 24.0.

Result

Study participants had a mean age of 51.5 ± 10.0 years, with a mean BMI of 28.60 ± 5.71kg/m^2. The median and interquartile range of the waist hip ratio and waist height ratio were 1.02 (1.01, 1.03) and 0.61 (0.58, 0.66) respectively. The proportion of obese participants, defined by WHtR, with uncontrolled BP was significantly higher than that for those with controlled BP (63.9% vs 47.5%; p = 0.024). Upon adjusting for sociodemographic variables, participants who were obese based on WHtR had 2.71 times the odds of having uncontrolled blood pressure compared to those who were not obese. This finding was statistically significant. (aOR = 2.71; 95% CI = 1.37–5.38; p = 0.004).

Conclusion

Anthropometric indices remain valuable predictors of blood pressure control. The WHtR, a measure of central obesity, compared to the BMI, was significantly associated with poor blood pressure control.

Introduction

Obesity is a complex disease involving an excessive amount of body fat, characterised by the excessive accumulation of adipose tissues across the human body.[1] Hypertension and obesity are among the strongest modifiable risk factors for non-communicable diseases (NCDs) including cardiovascular diseases and diabetes.[2,3] Obesity, especially abdominal obesity, has been shown to play a significant role

in the aetiology of hypertension,[4–7] and it is strongly associated with heart diseases, hypertension and diabetes.[5,6,8] Together with hypertension, obesity is a major cause of premature death worldwide.[6,8] Assessing abdominal adiposity in patients with hypertension is therefore important as it may help institute measures to correct it, thereby leading to an improvement in blood pressure control as well as preventing complications of hypertension.

The most commonly used measurement of obesity in patients with hypertension is the Body Mass Index (BMI).[1,3,7] While it remains the standard measure for general obesity, it does not measure the distribution of adipose tissue in the body, which plays a significant role in the development of cardiovascular diseases. Other measures of obesity that takes into account distribution of body fat include waist-Hip-Ratio (WHR) and Waist-Height-Ratio (WHtR). WHR and WHtR have been identified as better predictors of HTN compared to BMI.[3,4,6,9] This is because WHR and WHtR measures central obesity, while BMI measures general obesity.[6] WHtR has been identified as highly predictive of hypertension because it considers the impact of both the waist circumference and the height of an individual on body fat composition.[6,10,11] This is important as a short person will not have the same body fat composition as a tall person with the same abdominal and hip circumference. Furthermore, WHtR ≥ 0.5 increases the risk of dyslipidaemia, diabetes mellitus and hypertension.[9] A prospective study of 1,685 normotensive patients with type 2 diabetes mellitus in Iran found WHtR to be a more accurate tool compared to WHR and BMI for predicting hypertension.[4] Another study in Brazil found WHtR to be a better predictor of hypertension regardless of gender and age compared to BMI and Waist Circumference (WC) combined.[10] A Saudi study also reported WHtR as a good diagnostic tool for screening for cardiovascular risk factors and metabolic syndrome among Saudis.[9] A community-based study conducted in Lagos Nigeria among 5,135 adults found WHtR and other measures of central adiposity to be the strongest predictors and independent determinants of hypertension in Nigeria.[2]

The majority of the studies, including those described above, were community-based studies and on normotensive patients. This study aims to determine the association between obesity, assessed by BMI, WHR, and WHtR, and blood pressure control among patients with hypertension attending the Family Medicine Clinics of Irrua Specialist Teaching Hospital, Irrua, a semi-urban community in Edo State, Southern Nigeria. The primary outcome is the assessment of obesity, and the secondary outcome is the association of obesity with blood pressure control.

Methods

Study Design, Setting, and Participants

A cross-sectional study of 250 patients with hypertension attending the Family Medicine Clinics of Irrua Specialist Teaching Hospital (ISTH) was systematically selected and conducted between April and June 2023. Patients were aged 18 to 65 years and were antihypertensive-naive but had blood pressures ≥ 140/90 mmHg taken at least twice at an interval of ≥ ten minutes or were on antihypertensives for at

least 6 months. Patients who refused consent, had cognitive impairment, or had chronic kidney disease, heart failure, or other forms of secondary hypertension or complications from hypertension were excluded from the study.

Data Collection

Demographic and clinical data, including age, gender, marital status, occupation, and income, were collected. Blood pressure measurements were taken according to the American Heart Association guidelines using a standard mercury sphygmomanometer and a stethoscope. Three readings were taken at 10-minute intervals after the participant had rested for at least 15 minutes, and the average of the second and third readings was recorded. Hypertension was defined as blood pressure ≥ 140/90 mmHg, while blood pressure was considered controlled if it was < 140/90 mmHg.[12,13]

Anthropometric Measurements

Anthropometric indices including weight, height, waist circumference, and hip circumference were measured according to standardized procedures. Bodyweight was measured using a digital weighing scale to the nearest 0.1 kg, with participants standing without shoes and heavy clothing. Height was measured using a stadiometer to the nearest 0.1 cm. Waist circumference was measured at the midpoint between the lowest rib and the iliac crest to the nearest 0.1 cm with a flexible, non-stretchable tape which was also used to measure hip circumference at the level of the greater trochanters to the nearest 0.1 cm. body Mass Index (BMI), Waist-Hip Ratio (WHR) and Waist-Height Ratio (WHtR) were calculated from these measurements.[4,14,15] WHtR was categorized into obese (≥ 0.5) and not obese (< 0.5) as recommended.[7]

Statistical Analysis

Data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 24.0. Continuous variables were summarized using means and standard deviations (SD) or median and interquartile ranges (IQR) as appropriate, while categorical variables were summarized using proportions. Bivariate analysis was done using the Chi-square test, Student's t-test, and Mann-Whitney U test as appropriate. The Odds Ratio (OR) with 95% Confidence Interval (CI) was used to determine the strength of the association between obesity and uncontrolled blood pressure. Multivariable analysis using logistic regression was conducted to determine the predictors of uncontrolled blood pressure. The level of statistical significance was set at $p < 0.05$.

Results

Baseline Characteristics

The mean age of the participants was 51.5 ± 10.0 years, with the majority being female (62.4%). Most participants were married (54.0%), traders 87 (34.8%), with an average monthly income of between

N50,000 to N99,999 118 (47.2%). The sociodemographic characteristics of respondents are as shown in Table 1.

Table 1
Sociodemographic Characteristics of Respondents

Variable	Frequency (n = 250)	Percent (%)
Age as at Last Birthday (years)		
< 40	46	18.4
40–49	47	18.8
50–59	92	36.8
≥ 60	65	26.0
Sex		
Female	156	62.4
Male	94	37.6
Marital Status		
Single	12	4.8
Married	135	54.0
Divorced/Separated	47	18.8
Widowed	56	22.4
Occupation		
Artisan	32	12.8
Civil servant	86	34.4
Farmer	29	11.6
Trader	87	34.8
Unemployed	16	6.4
Average Monthly Income ()		
< 50,000	72	28.8
50,000–99,999	118	47.2
100,000–199,999	52	20.8
≥ 200,000	8	3.2
Mean age ± SD in years = 51.5 ± 10.0		

Anthropometric Measurements

The mean BMI was 28.60 ± 5.71 kg/m². The median and interquartile range of the waist-hip ratio and waist-height ratio were 1.02 (1.01, 1.03) and 0.61 (0.58, 0.66) respectively. Table 2.

Table 2
Anthropometric Characteristics

Variable	Frequency (n = 250)	Percent (%)
Height (m)		
< 1.60	62	24.8
1.60–1.69	119	47.6
1.70–1.79	66	26.4
≥ 1.80	3	1.2
Weight (kg)		
< 50.00	8	3.2
50.00–69.99	77	30.8
70.00–89.99	112	44.8
≥ 90.00	53	21.2
Body Mass Index (kg/m^2)		
< 18.50	5	2.0
18.50–24.99	67	26.8
25.00–29.99	78	31.2
≥ 30.00	100	40.0
Waist Circumference (m)		
< 0.90	13	5.2
0.90–0.99	127	50.8
1.00–1.09	52	20.8
1.10–1.19	41	16.4
≥ 1.20	17	6.8
Hip Circumference (m)		
< 0.90	5	2.0
0.90–0.99	160	64.0
1.00–1.09	34	13.6

Variable	Frequency (n = 250)	Percent (%)
Height (m)		
1.10–1.19	44	17.6
≥ 1.20	7	2.8

Obesity Classifications

Using BMI, 100 (40.0%) respondents were found to be obese. The number of obese respondents increased to 178 (71.2%), 221 (88.4%) and 150 (60.0%) when obesity was measured based on waist circumference, waist hip ratio and waist height ratio respectively. Table 3.

Table 3
Obesity Classifications

Obesity	Frequency (n = 250)	Percent (%)
According to BMI		
Not obese	150	60.0
Obese	100	40.0
According to WC		
Not obese	72	28.8
Obese	178	71.2
According to WHR		
Not obese	29	11.6
Obese	221	88.4
According to WHtR		
Not obese	100	40.0
Obese	150	60.0

Blood Pressure Control

Majority of respondents had uncontrolled blood pressure 191 (76.4%) as illustrated in Table 4.

Table 4
Blood Pressure Control

Blood Pressure Control	Frequency (n = 250)	Percent (%)
Controlled	59	23.6
Uncontrolled	191	76.4

Obesity and BP Control

The proportion of participants who were obese based on WHtR was higher among those with uncontrolled blood pressure compared to controlled blood pressure (63.9% vs 47.5%; p = 0.024). Table 5.

Table 5
Obesity and BP Control

Variable	Controlled BP N = 59 n (%)	Uncontrolled BP N = 191 n (%)	χ^2	p-value
According to BMI				
Not obese	36 (61.0)	114 (59.7)	0.033	0.855
Obese	23 (39.0)	77 (40.3)		
According to WC				
Not obese	16 (27.1)	56 (29.3)	0.107	0.744
Obese	43 (72.9)	135 (70.7)		
According to WHR				
Not obese	7 (11.9)	22 (11.5)	0.005	0.942
Obese	52 (88.1)	169 (88.5)		
According to WHtR				
Not obese	31 (52.5)	69 (36.1)	5.062	0.024
Obese	28 (47.5)	122 (63.9)		

Table 6; Participants who were obese based on WHtR had higher odds of having uncontrolled blood pressure compared to those who were not obese (aOR = 2.71; 95% CI = 1.37–5.38; p = 0.004).

Table 6
Multivariable Binary Logistic Regression showing the Association between Obesity and BP Control

Variable	Adjusted odds ratio	95% CI	p-value
Obesity according to BMI			
Not obese	Reference		
Obese	1.28	0.66–2.48	0.462
Obesity according to WC			
Not obese	Reference		
Obese	1.48	0.46–4.73	0.512
Obesity according to WHR			
Not obese	Reference		
Obese	0.71	0.23–2.18	0.549
Obesity according to WHtR			
Not obese	Reference		
Obese	2.71	1.37–5.38	0.004

Discussion

This cross sectional study evaluated the anthropometric assessment of obesity in patients with hypertension attending an out-patient clinic in a rural setting, in Southern Nigeria. We assessed four anthropometric indices, including the body mass index (BMI), waist circumference (WC), waist hip ratio (WHR) and waist to height ratio (WHtR).The mean age of the study population was 51.5 years (51.5 ± 10.0). This is similar to findings in related studies in Ethiopia.[16, 17]

Our study showed that the prevalence of uncontrolled hypertension in the study population was high (76.4%), higher than reports from previous studies from different ethnic groups and nationalities with Addis Ababa and Tigray Ethiopia (63%)[17], Iran (61.1%)[18] and South Africa (56.8%)[19]. Earlier studies have reported hypertension, a major health problem in Africa, with an estimated prevalence of 30.8%.[20, 21] Perhaps the observed differences in prevalence may not be unconnected with varying lifestyles and practices among the studied populations.

We found in the study, a mean BMI, WC and HC of 28.60 ± 5.71kg/m^2, 1.02 ± 0.09m and 1.01 ± 0.09m respectively. Among the anthropometric indexes, BMI is used commonly for evaluating obesity.[22, 23] Although BMI is the most frequently used index, it does not reflect body fatness uniformly in all populations, and inter-ethnic extrapolations are not justified.[24] The mean BMI finding in our study is

consistent with findings in earlier study in South Eastern Nigeria.[25] We found a mean BMI of 28.6 kg/m^2 which was lower compared with the current definitions of obesity recommended by WHO (BMI ≥ 30 kg/m^2).[26] However our figures are higher than reported figures more than a decade earlier (2%) among rural dwellers in south -western Nigeria.[27] This may not be unrelated to changing lifestyle patterns and trends of the Nigerian rural populace.

The WC is an essential measure of anthropometry and it directly measures central adiposity. Increasing central adiposity is associated with an increased risk of morbidity and mortality due to an increased risk of diabetes and heart disease[28]. The current study found a mean WC greater than the African-specific WC cut-off points for central obesity of 94 cm for men and 80cm for women which were adopted in International Diabetic Federation (IDF).[29] Our study demonstrated a median and interquartile range of the waist hip ratio and waist height ratio of 1.02 (1.01, 1.03) and 0.61 (0.58, 0.66) respectively.

Furthermore, the inter-relationship of obesity indices was further demonstrated where 40% of the study population were obese using the BMI. This prevalence was further increased to 71.2%, 88.4% and 60.0% respectively employing WC, WHR and WHtR. Whereas the commonly used obesity index in clinical practice is the BMI, on the basis of our finding, the indices for central obesity (WC, WHR, WHtR) may define obesity more accurately.[30] This finding was statistically significant in the current study.

The study found that central obesity, as measured by WHtR, was significantly associated with poor blood pressure control in these patients. This finding is consistent with previous studies that have demonstrated the superiority of central obesity measures, such as WHtR, in predicting hypertension compared to general obesity measures like BMI.[30,31] The relationship between central obesity and hypertension can be attributed to the fact that abdominal obesity is closely linked to insulin resistance, inflammation, and dyslipidemia, all of which are key mechanisms in the development of hypertension and other cardiovascular diseases.[4,5,7] WHtR takes into account both waist circumference and height, making it a more accurate measure of abdominal adiposity and distribution.

The study has several implications for clinical practice. Firstly, it underscores the importance of assessing central obesity, especially in patients with hypertension, to identify those at higher risk of poor blood pressure control. Secondly, it emphasizes the need for targeted interventions that address central obesity, such as lifestyle modifications and pharmacotherapy, to improve blood pressure control and reduce the risk of complications.

Limitations:

The study has some limitations. Firstly, its cross-sectional design limits the ability to establish a causal relationship between central obesity and blood pressure control. Secondly, the study was conducted at a single center, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other populations. Lastly, the study

did not assess other potential confounders, such as dietary habits and physical activity, which could influence the relationship between central obesity and blood pressure control.

Conclusion

In conclusion, central obesity, as measured by the waist-height ratio, is significantly associated with poor blood pressure control in patients with hypertension. These findings highlight the importance of incorporating central obesity assessments into the management of hypertension to identify individuals at higher risk of uncontrolled blood pressure. Further research, including longitudinal studies, is needed to better understand the causal relationship between central obesity and blood pressure control, as well as to explore the effectiveness of interventions targeting central obesity in improving blood pressure outcomes.

Declarations

Acknowledgments:

The authors would like to thank all the participants who took part in the study.

Ethics approval and consent to participate:

Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the Ethics Committee of Irrua Specialist Teaching Hospital (ISTH/HREC/20230802/446) and the research was carried out in conformity with the Declaration of Helsinki. Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study after a detailed explanation of the study to them.

Consent for publication:

Not applicable.

Availability of data and materials:

Data and materials used for the study will be made available upon request from the corresponding author.

Competing interests:

The authors declare no competing interest whatsoever.

Funding:

The authors received no specific funding for this work.

Authors' contributions:

OTIA – Conception and design, material preparation, data collection and analysis, and writing of the first draft.

ASD – Conception and design, and manuscript writing.

OAO – Conception and design, material preparation, data collection and analysis, and manuscript writing.

AYA – Conception and design, and manuscript writing.

UNE – Conception and design, material preparation, data collection and analysis, and manuscript writing.

All authors commented on previous versions of the manuscript, read and approved the final manuscript.

Authors' information:

Dr Tijani Idris Ahmad Oseni is a lecturer with the Department of Family Medicine, Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma. He is also a Consultant Family Physician and head, Lifestyle and Behavioural medicine Unit, Department of Family Medicine, Irrua Specialist Teaching Hospital, Irrua, Nigeria.

Dr Suleman Dazumi Ahmed is a Consultant Nephrologist, Department of Internal Medicine, Irrua Specialist Teaching Hospital, Irrua, Nigeria.

Dr Afiong Oboko Oku is an associate professor, Department of Community Medicine, University of Calabar, Calabar, Nigeria.

Dr Yekeen Ayodele Ayoola is a senior lecturer, Department of Internal Medicine, Gombe State University, Gombe, Nigeria.

Prof Ndifreke Ekpo Udonwa is a professor of family medicine, Department of Family Medicine, University of Calabar, Calabar, Nigeria.

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