

Research on high blood pressure SPRINTs forward

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With two-thirds of the U.S. population over age 60 suffering from high blood pressure, concern is justifiably growing over the consequences of hypertension on health. A study at Tulane is providing “a unique opportunity to study risk factors for hypertension and determinants for blood pressure control,” says researcher Dr. Jing Chen.



The Systolic Blood Pressure Intervention Trial studies whether a treatment program aimed at reducing systolic blood pressure to a lower goal than currently recommended will reduce cardiovascular disease risk. (Photo from Masterfile)

The Systolic Blood Pressure Intervention Trial (SPRINT) is under way at the Tulane University [School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine](#).

Conducted at 90 sites nationwide, SPRINT examines “whether a treatment program aimed at reducing systolic blood pressure to a lower goal than currently recommended will reduce cardiovascular disease risk,” says [Chen](#), co-investigator of the study. The program spans four to six years.

Once enrolled, participants are randomly placed either into an intensive group (aiming to decrease systolic blood pressure level below 120 mm Hg), or a standard

group (attempting a level less than 140 mm Hg). The trial's clinical team works with healthcare providers, selecting appropriate medication to aid participants in reaching their target. The cost of medication is covered by the trial.

In addition, SPRINT investigates whether aggressively treating high blood pressure can reduce risk of stroke, chronic kidney disease and even cognitive decline.

“Hypertension is the primary risk factor for small vessel ischemic disease and cortical white matter abnormalities in the brain, which are an independent risk factor for cognitive decline and dementia,” says Chen. The study explores hypertension's effect on memory through neuropsychological tests, ranging from simple questionnaires to an MRI.

Prospective SPRINT participants are at least 50 years old, experience high blood pressure (with a systolic level of at least 130 mm Hg) and have no history of diabetes, stroke, organ transplant or end-stage renal disease. To volunteer for the [study](#), call 504-988-4390 or email sprint@tulane.edu.

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