



News Release

For Immediate Release
April 10, 2014

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The NMA Opposes Eighth Joint Committee (JNC 8) Target Blood Pressure

A Position Statement by the National Medical Association

Silver Spring, MD-(April 10, 2014)-The recently released guidelines on hypertension by the Eighth Joint National Committee (JNC 8) have been a source of considerable controversy amongst members as well as the leadership of the National Medical Association (NMA). The NMA, the oldest and largest organization of African-American physicians representing over 37,000 physicians and their patients, feel strongly that there is insufficient evidence to recommend a blood pressure target of 150/90mmHg or less as an optimal goal of blood pressure for patients age 60 and older. The NMA is an organization that has always been dedicated to reducing health disparities and improving health in communities of color and the underserved. Hypertension (high blood pressure) is a common condition in which the force of the blood against your artery walls is high enough that it may eventually cause health problems, such as heart disease. Many individuals can have high blood pressure (hypertension) for years without any symptoms. We all know that uncontrolled high blood pressure increases one's risk of serious health problems, including heart attack and stroke. High blood pressure typically develops over many years, and it affects nearly everyone eventually.

Thus, the NMA leadership, including the Internal Medicine section of the NMA, along with highly regarded hypertension experts within the organization feel that the JNC 8-recommended target blood pressure for this group should *not* be used for the following reasons:

- 1) There is insufficient randomized clinical trial evidence to increase the goal systolic blood pressure to greater than 150mmHg.
- 2) This new goal systolic blood pressure may cause harm to high-risk cardiovascular populations such as African Americans, who also carry significant cardiovascular co-morbidities such as diabetes, obesity, low socio-economic status, psychosocial stress, etc.
- 3) Having one goal blood pressure of 140/90mmHg would likely make hypertension management simpler and promote wider acceptance among many healthcare providers.
- 4) There were five (5) dissenters on the JNC 8 panel who gave a minority position against the 150/90mmHg target blood pressure for patients 60 years of age or older.
- 5) Other prestigious national and international hypertension organizations have also supported the target blood pressure of 140/90mmHg.

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Founded in 1895, the National Medical Association (NMA) is the nation's oldest and largest medical association representing the interests of more than 37,000 African American physicians and their patients and the communities they serve. The NMA repeatedly advocates for policies that would assure equitable and quality health care for all people. For more information on the NMA visit, www.NMAnet.org