



Dr. Rosario Rebello, General Internist

As director of Capital Health's Hypertension clinic, Dr. Rosario Rebello has been helping patients manage their high blood pressure for more than 10 years. "Hypertension is an important risk factor for cardiovascular disease, and the single most important modifiable risk factor for stroke. Of course, knowledge of one's blood pressure is the essential first step," says Dr. Rebello.

He notes that we have come a long way since the early 1990s when only two thirds of patients were aware of what their blood pressure was, and in 2009 that number had increased to over 80 percent. Even more impressive, within the same time frame, was the improvement in the percentage of Canadians whose hypertension was controlled while on treatment, from a dismal 13%, to 65%.

Through Capital Health's Hypertension clinic, Dr. Rebello and his colleagues see patients with "difficult to control" blood pressure, and where appropriate, investigate patients for secondary hypertension. The clinic also provides an education service that emphasizes a healthy lifestyle through diet, exercise and cutting back on salt intake, measures which help to lower blood pressure. He also reminds patients to "read food labels" so that they can appreciate the shocking amounts of sodium that the food industry throws at us.

As with any disease, correct diagnosis is important, and Dr. Rebello emphasizes that using the technique to measure blood pressure as described in the Canadian Hypertension Education Program (CHEP) is most important. For this reason, he eschews casual blood pressure readings taken in pharmacies, which tend to engender anxiety in patients and can lead to a misdiagnosis of hypertension.

The clinic also arranges for 24-hour ambulatory blood pressure monitoring (ABPM). There are many patients whose elevated office blood pressure turns out to be perfectly normal on ABPM. In the Hypertension clinic, the BPTru apparatus is used for measuring blood pressure, and is a reliable method for diagnosing "white coat hypertension". Dr. Rebello encourages patients to measure their blood pressure at home, and makes sure that they leave with a brochure explaining the correct technique for blood pressure measurement.

In all, the Hypertension Clinic sees about 1,400 patients annually.

Dr. Rebello is also a General Internist and Assistant Professor of Medicine at Dalhousie University. He enjoys teaching clinical skills to medical students, and supervises and mentors residents on the medical teaching unit. In doing so, he stresses that taking a careful history and examining your patient, and keeping an open mind, more often than not leads to the correct diagnosis. He believes that Medicine is still an art. And, he also enjoys cooking, and reads food labels!