Comparison of clinic, home and ambulatory blood pressure measurement

EOIN O'BRIEN,‡ DESMOND FITZGERALD‡ and KEVIN O'MALLEY

The Blood Pressure Clinic, Beaumont Hospital, Dublin 9 and The Blood Pressure Measurement Laboratory and Department of Clinical Pharmacology, Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland, St Stephen's Green, Dublin 2, Ireland

Twenty untreated patients with diastolic blood pressure between 90 and 110 mmHg had their blood pressures measured with a mercury sphygmomanometer at fortnightly intervals over a 6-week period during which time one 12-hour ambulatory blood pressure (ABP) measurement was also recorded. This was followed by a 2-month period of home recording of blood pressure (HBP) during which fortnightly measurements were made at the clinic (CBP) together with two 12-hour ABP measurements. During a further 4-week period fortnightly clinic measurements were made with one final assessment of ABP. Of the three methods of blood pressure assessment, ABP gave statistically significant lower systolic blood pressures than either HBP (p < 0.001) or CBP (p < 0.001). Similar trends were observed for diastolic pressure but were not significant. The relationship between the three measurement systems was highly variable, though differences between home and clinic recordings, and between ambulatory and clinic recordings, were significantly correlated both for systolic and diastolic pressures. Home recording as judged by clinic and ambulatory blood pressure measurements did not have a blood pressure lowering effect.

Keywords: Home recording; clinic blood pressure; ambulatory blood pressure; Renier.

Introduction

Ambulatory blood pressure (ABP) may be a better predictor of end-organ damage and therefore of severity of disease than clinic-recorded blood pressure (CBP) in hypertensive subjects [1]. However, the automated portable blood pressure recorders on which these studies are based are expensive and not widely available [2]. Home recording of blood pressure (HBP) is a practical alternative and has been advocated as a method of assessing blood pressure outside the clinic [3, 4]. Most studies have shown that patients [5] or their relatives [6] achieve a degree of accuracy comparable with trained medical staff after only a short period of training. It has been suggested that HBP may have a blood pressure lowering effect in hypertensive subjects [7–9] but this observation has been based on clinic recordings. In this study CBP and HBP recordings are compared with ABP recordings obtained with a portable device which allows blood pressure measurement during normal daily activities. In addition the effect of home recording by the patient on both clinic and ambulatory blood pressure behaviour is assessed.

‡ Present address: Assistant Professor, Department of Pharmacology, Vanderbilt University, Tennessee, USA

‡ Correspondence to Dr Eoin O'Brien, The Blood Pressure Unit, Beaumont Hospital, Dublin 9, Ireland.
Methods
Comparison of blood pressure measurement

Ambulatory blood pressure

This was measured with a portable non-invasive semi-automated blood pressure recorder, the Remler M2000 which we have shown to be accurate [10], and the recordings of which are reproducible [11]. The magnetic tape was decoded by auscultating each tape to minimize inaccuracy in interpretation. Patients attended the hospital at 0900 h to have the recorder fitted and recorded their blood pressure thereafter at 30-min intervals until they retired to bed. Home recordings were not attempted on the day of ambulatory measurement.

Data analysis

The four clinic pressures during home recording were compared with the two clinic pressures immediately preceding and the two clinic pressures following home recordings. Similarly, the two ambulatory recordings (mean of all recordings in the day) during the home recording period were compared with the ambulatory recording immediately preceding and that following home recording. The first day of ambulatory recording was not included in the analysis as previous studies have suggested that recordings on subsequent days tend to be lower [12, 13]. For comparison of methods, the mean of each 2 weeks of home recording (four measurements) was compared with the corresponding clinic (four measurements) and mean ambulatory blood pressures (two measurements). Comparison of multiple means was by two-way analysis of variance with Scheffe's correction for multiple comparisons where appropriate [14]. When Scheffe's correction was used, a probability level of 10% was considered to be significant.

Results

Of the 20 patients recruited for the study one patient failed to return to the clinic and one had a marked rise in clinic and ambulatory blood pressure during the home recording period which was not detectable by her own blood pressure determinations, and as neither of these patients completed the study their data are not included. Another patient required treatment after completion of the home recording period, but prior to her final clinic visit, because of an excessive rise in home and clinic blood pressure, and is included in the analysis. The mean age (± SEM) of the remaining 18 patients was 43.9 ± 2.1 with a range of 29 to 60 years. All patients achieved the required degree of accuracy in self-recording of blood pressure.

Home-recorded blood pressures were less than clinic pressures although this was significant only for systolic blood pressure (table 1, figure 1). Similarly, comparison of ambulatory recordings with clinic and home recordings during the home-recording period showed that ambulatory systolic, but not diastolic, recordings were less than both home and clinic blood pressures. However, the relationships between home, clinic and ambulatory recordings were highly variable, particularly for systolic pressure recordings (table 2). Differences between home and clinic recordings, and between ambulatory and clinic recordings, were significantly correlated both for systolic and diastolic pressures.

Home-clinic differences tended to decrease with age, though this was significant.
only for diastolic blood pressure. During the home-recording phase no change occurred in systolic or diastolic blood pressure recorded in the clinic. Similarly, there was no change in ambulatory blood pressure during this phase when compared with the ambulatory recordings preceding and following the home-recording period (figure 1).

Table 1. Comparison of home (HBP, four 2-weekly intervals), clinic (CBP, four 2-weekly visits), and ambulatory (ABP, 2 days) blood pressures during the home recording period in 18 patients

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>HBP</th>
<th>CBP</th>
<th>ABP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Systolic blood pressure</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean ± SEM</td>
<td>153.5 ± 3.5</td>
<td>160.0 ± 3.9</td>
<td>147.9 ± 3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean difference</td>
<td>6.5 ± 3.1°</td>
<td>12.1 ± 3.8°</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean HBP-CBP difference</td>
<td>5.4 ± 3.3°</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Diastolic blood pressure</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean ± SEM</td>
<td>93.6 ± 2.6</td>
<td>95.7 ± 2.6</td>
<td>96.8 ± 2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean difference</td>
<td>2.1 ± 1.6</td>
<td>1.1 ± 1.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean HBP-CBP difference</td>
<td>3.2 ± 1.6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* $p < 0.001.$

![Figure 1](image-url)
Comparison of blood pressure measurement

![Graph showing the relationship between age and clinic-home difference in blood pressure measurements.](image)

**Figure 2.** Home-clinic differences related to age.

Table 2. Correlation between home (HBP), clinic (CBP), and ambulatory (ABP) blood pressure measurement, and differences between methods and age for systolic and diastolic pressures in 18 patients

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Systolic</th>
<th>Diastolic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>( r )</td>
<td>( p )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBP v. ABP(^*)</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>&lt;0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBP v. HBP(^*)</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>&lt;0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HBP v. ABP</td>
<td>0.509</td>
<td>&lt;0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age v. CBP-HBP difference</td>
<td>-0.263</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age v. CBP-ABP difference</td>
<td>0.265</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Comparison of means during the home-recording period.

**Discussion**

This study confirms that patients can be trained to record blood pressure accurately, and that only a short period of training is required [3, 4]. As reported in other studies home-recorded systolic blood pressure was lower than that recorded in the clinic [4, 5]. The difference between clinic and home blood pressure recordings varies widely between studies, possibly reflecting differences in the patients studied as clinic-home differences increase with the level of blood pressure and decreases with age and duration of clinic attendance [15].

Home-recorded blood pressures were higher than ambulatory blood pressure and were nearer to clinic pressures, as has been observed by Gould et al. [3]. Differences between clinic and ambulatory blood pressure measurements are of clinical importance since ambulatory blood pressure recordings may be more accurate in predicting end-organ disease in hypertensive subjects [1].

In this study blood pressure control, as determined in the clinic and by ambulatory monitoring during normal daily activities, was unaltered during the phase of home recording. Although previous reports have suggested that home
recording of blood pressure by hypertensive patients, both treated and untreated, lowers blood pressure these studies were poorly controlled [7–9] or antihypertensive treatment was altered as required [7, 9] and may have been influenced by the level of blood pressure measured at home. Furthermore, the fall in blood pressure was most marked in the initial period of home recording [8] and may have reflected the tendency for blood pressure to decrease with repeated measurement [16]. In addition the conclusion of previous studies that home recording by patients may influence blood pressure control was based on clinic measurements. In this study patients were untreated and the lack of any effect on clinic blood pressure control was confirmed by ambulatory recordings.

Acknowledgements
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References


Application of cusums to ambulatory blood pressure data: a simple statistical technique for detecting trends over time

Eoin O'Brien, Ivan Perry, James Sheridan, Neil Atkins and Kevin O'Malley

Journal of Hypertension 1989, 7:707-709

Keywords: Twenty-four-hour ambulatory blood pressure, cusums.

Review

Ambulatory blood pressure measurement monitoring has become an increasingly important method of investigation in hypertension [1] and automated non-invasive devices which allow frequent measurements of ambulatory blood pressure and the pulse rate over 24 h are now available. The accuracy [2] and the reproducibility [3] of ambulatory measurements have been documented. However, data from ambulatory blood pressure monitoring are characterized by wide scatter, due to random variability, short-term fluctuations with posture, physical and mental activity and long-term variability with seasonal [4], dietary [5,6] and hormonal [7] changes. Superimposed upon the distribution of data there is also the influence of diurnal blood pressure variation.

It is difficult to detect early trends when data collected at regular time intervals show wide scatter. The calculation of cumulative sums (‘cusums’) is a simple statistical technique which allows early and precise detection of trends in data of this nature. Although described in the medical literature over a decade ago [8,9], this technique is still uncommon in clinical medicine. It is particularly appropriate for the analysis of data derived from 24 h ambulatory blood pressure monitoring.

The cusums technique consists of the selection of an arbitrary reference value, such as the mean of daytime blood pressure, which is then subtracted from each point in succession. The successive deviations of each data point from the reference value are then added cumulatively, i.e. the first to the second, the sum of these to the third and so on. The ‘cumulative sums’ derived in this manner are then plotted against time with the ambulatory blood pressure data. The reference value chosen is typically the mean of an initial series of observations. However, the overall mean or any other clinically relevant reference point may be used.

Figures 1 and 2 illustrate cusum plots of blood pressure superimposed on the original ambulatory blood pressure data recorded over 24 h in a normotensive subject. The reference value used in Fig. 1 (122/80 mmHg) is the mean of all recordings. Minor changes in the mean of the original data from the baseline are detected by a change in the slope of the cusum plot. The point-in-time of change is accurately identified and the statistical significance of changes in trend is readily calculated [10,11]. Any reference value, arbitrarily chosen from the same data set, will yield a cusum plot giving the same point of change. Figure 2 shows the data from the same subject using a different reference value, the mean daytime (0800–2400 h) blood pressure (128/83 mmHg). While the slope of the cusum plot is necessarily different, the point of change in slope is the same as in Figure 1 and is readily identified. However, the selection of the mean daytime ambulatory blood pressure as a reference value illustrates the point of change more clearly by bringing the plots of daytime blood pressure and cusum closer together.

The cusum technique has a number of uses in ambulatory blood pressure measurement: diurnal patterns may be identified; the time and the extent of the nocturnal blood pressure fall are readily appreciated from the illustrated plots; the nature of blood pressure variability and its relationship with situational and biological factors such as sleep, level of activity, stress, the heart rate and hormonal activity may be carefully analysed; subgroups of hypertensive patients who display less marked diurnal blood pressure change may be characterized, and the onset and duration of effect of antihypertensive agents may also be identified.

We suggest that cusum plots extend the potential of 24 h ambulatory blood pressure monitoring both in hypertension research and in the clinical assessment of patients with this disorder.

From the Blood Pressure Unit, Beaumont Hospital, Dublin 9, and the Department of Clinical Pharmacology, Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland, Dublin 2, Eire.

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Requests for reprints to: Dr E. O'Brien, The Blood Pressure Unit, Beaumont Hospital, Dublin 9, Eire.

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Fig. 1. Ambulatory blood pressure data and derived cusum plots in a normotensive subject. Cusum reference values, 128/80 mmHg. □, systolic; ◆, cusum.

Fig. 2. Ambulatory blood pressure data and derived cusum plot for a normotensive subject (Fig. 1). Cusum reference values, 128/80 mmHg. □, systolic; ◆, cusum.
References


