Hypertension

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Hypertension

• A person is physically qualified to drive a commercial motor vehicle if that person:
  – Has no current clinical diagnosis of high blood pressure likely to interfere with his/her ability to operate a CMV safely

Relevance to Driving

• HTN alone is unlikely to cause sudden incapacitation BUT
  – Risk factor for
    • CVD
    • CRF
  – For every 20 mm Hg systolic or 10mm Hg diastolic
    • Doubling of mortality from
      – Ischemic Heart Disease
      – Stroke

Relevance to Driving

• Commercial Drivers at Greater Risk for HTN
  – Risk increases with years driving
    • 10 years 32% of drivers
    • 20 years 39% of drivers
  – Sedentary, irregular sleep schedules, stress, poor diet, supplements for wakefulness etc.

Health History and Physical Examination

• Fundamental obligation is to establish whether the driver has high BP that is likely to interfere with the ability to operate a CMV safely, thus endangering public safety.
Examination

• Based on:
  – History provided by driver
  – Objective (measure bp/your exam)
  – Any additional testing you require

• Remember
  – Certification depends on comprehensive medical assessment of overall health and informed medical judgment about the impact of single or multiple conditions on the whole person

Key Points

• You should ask the same questions of the driver with hypertension that you would for any individual with hypertension or being assessed for hypertension

• Current Diagnosis of hypertension exists when one or more antihypertensive medication is used to treat hypertension

• If treated with antihypertensive for another condition certification is based on that condition and tolerance to medication

Key Points

• You may/should ask questions that supplement the questions asked on the form

• You may/should ask about symptoms of hypertension and the use of antihypertensive medications

• You Should evaluate for other CV diseases like: CHD, CHF, LVH, TIA, PAD, retinopathy, nephropathy and other target organ damage

Recommendation

• You may/should ask
  – Contact info for treating provider and medical release
  – Symptoms caused by HTN
  – Limitations from disease or Tx
  – Lifestyle risk factors (smoke, exercise, obesity)
  – Uncontrolled hypertension three or more meds? Consider evaluation for secondary hypertension.

Regulation

• You must:
  – Review and discuss with driver any “yes” answers on health history
    • Have high BP?
    • Take medication?

• You must:
  – Measure BP
  – Confirm BP >139/89 with second measurement taken later in exam
  – Check pulse rate, strength and rhythm

• Special note for providers from the government:
  It would be prudent for the medical examiner to confirm disqualifying BP personally
Document

• Any affirmative history including:
  – Onset date and diagnosis
  – Medication(s) dose and frequency
  – Any current limitation(s)

• Potential negative effects of meds with driving including OTCs

Document

• Any abnormal findings including:
  – Effect on driver ability to operate a CMV safely
  – Necessary steps to correct the condition as soon as possible, particularly if the untreated condition could result in more serious illness that might affect driving

• Any additional tests and evaluation

Certification

• Essential hypertension certification guidelines based on three stage hypertensive model from JNC VI

• Stages 1 or 2 BP > 140/90 but < 180/100
  – Consider
    • Certification or recertification
    • Current certification interval
    • Treatment
    • Severity prior to treatment

Certification

• Essential Hypertension, treated, no complications, BP < 140/90 may certify for two years
• Stage 1 140-159/90-99, one year certificate, BP must be < 140/90 at annual exam, if not but < 160/100 may extend certification for 3 months
• Stage 2 169-179/100-109 indication for pharmacologic therapy, may certify for 3 months, recheck if blood pressure ≤ 140/90 may certify for 1 year from initial exam
• Stage 3 ≥ 180/110 do not certify, once bp ≤ 140/90 you may certify for six months

Certification Key Point

• The three month extension on stage 2 hypertension may not be used consecutively but may be used more than once during the lifetime of the driver
Secondary Hypertension

- If non-hypertensive or stage one 3 months after surgical intervention you may certify for one year

Scenario 1

- Mr. Jones presents for certification, on lisinopril/hctz 20/12.5mg, no complications, never hospitalized, history unremarkable, no TOD, no side effects from medications, physical exam normal, bp measurements of 130/85, and 125/82
  - You may certify for:
    - A) 1 year
    - B) 2 years
    - C) 3 months, and get a note from his treating physician
    - D) 6 months
    - E) All of the above

Answer

- B) Two years, this is well controlled essential hypertension without complications

Scenario 2

- Ms. Brown presents for recertification, currently taking HCTZ 12.5 mg, history unremarkable, physical examination unremarkable, bp 150/95, 150/90
  - You may certify for:
    - A) 1 year
    - B) 2 years
    - C) 3 months
    - D) 6 months
    - E) All of the above

Answer

- B) Three months, blood pressure at recertification needs to be < 140/90 in order to recertify for another year

Scenario 3

- Mr. Bird presents for recertification, admits to no medical history except hypertension, on Coreg and Lisinopril. Physical Exam shows sternal scar, otherwise unremarkable, blood pressure readings 130/80, 125/85
  - You Should
    - A) Certify for two years
    - B) Certify for one year
    - C) Certify for three months
    - D) Ask a few more questions
Questions?

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