

72

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LABOUR MARKET CONDITIONS AND THE ONSET OF HYPERTENSION AMONG A COHORT OF ONTARIANS: EXAMINING DIFFERENCES BY GENDER

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Objectives Hypertension is a growing public health concern in developed countries. The objective of this study was to examine the relationship between labour market conditions and the onset of hypertension over a 10 year period, using secondary data from Ontario respondents to the 2000–01 Canadian Community Health Survey linked to the administrative data from Ontario Health Insurance Plan at the individual level.

Methods Our sample was labour market participants aged 35–60, who were not self-employed, and working more than 10 h per week, more than 20 weeks in the last 12 months, and free of hypertension at baseline (N=6628).

Results Over the follow-up period 19.4% of our sample developed hypertension. Cox proportional hazard regression models examined the relationships between labour market conditions (multiple jobs, weeks worked, shift schedule, occupational physical activity, activity limitations and job control) and risk of hypertension. After adjustment for age, gender, marital status, body mass index, urban or rural living location, education, diabetes and heart disease at baseline, immigration and ethnicity variables, the lowest quartile of job control (OR=1.33, 95% CI 1.02 to 1.72) and activity limitations at work (OR=1.25, 95% CI 1.01 to 1.54) were associated with increased risk of developing hypertension. Additional adjustment for health behaviours did not change these relationships. The relationship between job control and hypertension differed by gender, with the effects being stronger among men than women.

Conclusions This paper highlights the importance of job control in the development of hypertension among men, but not women, in Ontario.