

Healthcare IT News

EMRs could help diagnose high blood pressure in kids

By [Richard Pizzi, Associate Editor](#) | 08/22/07 |

CHICAGO – Electronic medical records could play a role in diagnosing high blood pressure among children and adolescents in the United States, said authors of a study published last week.

The study, published in this week's *Journal of the American Medical Association*, focused on hypertension in juveniles, which is a growing problem linked to increases in childhood obesity.

Hypertension often indicates other diseases in children, such as endocrine disorders, kidney or heart disease.

Researchers at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland examined more than 14,000 young people ages 3 to 18 and found 507 cases of hypertension. Nearly three quarters of that group, or 376 cases, had not been diagnosed despite at least three previous medical checkups.

An estimated 3.6 percent of the children had high blood pressure, within the range found in other studies, the researchers found.

Dr. Matthew Hansen and colleagues suggested that electronic medical records could be upgraded to better diagnose juvenile hypertension by comparing the results of earlier medical exams, although juvenile hypertension is difficult to confirm because it varies by sex, height and weight.

The researchers said EMRs have the potential to be configured to "review current and prior blood pressures, ages, heights, and sex to determine if abnormal blood pressure criteria had been met."

"If abnormal blood pressure is not identified by a patient's pediatric clinician, it may be years before the abnormal blood pressure is detected, leading to end-organ damage," the researchers added.