



24TH SCIENTIFIC MEETING OF
THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY
OF HYPERTENSION
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MEDIA RELEASE

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THE EYES HAVE IT

HOW TO DETECT ORGAN DAMAGE IN PATIENTS WITH HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE

Advanced digital photography of the blood vessels in the eye can now predict the risk of target organ damage associated with high blood pressure in adults and even in children.

Professor Tien Wong from the Singapore Eye Research Centre at the National University of Singapore will present his team's findings, along with other international scientific leaders, at the 24th Scientific Meeting of the International Society of Hypertension in Sydney next week.

Professor Wong and his team are using computer image analysis to study these photographs and detect early changes in blood vessels in the retina. This commonly available technology is non invasive, painless and gives the doctor the ability to predict the condition of blood vessels close to the surface throughout the body. If they are narrowed or showing other changes it is a good indicator of existing or future high blood pressure.

"By taking an eye photograph of a patient, and using computer imaging software, we can detect very subtle changes in the eye blood vessels which can mean there is early damage," said Professor Wong.

"This way of looking at the condition of blood vessels may help doctors assess the risk of abnormal circulation in elsewhere and thus early diseases, such as small blood vessel changes in the brain which are signals for stroke and even heart failure and kidney disease. These conditions can all be related to high blood pressure.

"In one study reported in this conference, we used retinal digital photography in a group of patients over 60 years of age, and found that those with sparser or fewer blood vessels were more likely to have early cognitive impairment associated with dementia.

"Sometimes we use this technique to help us determine if someone with "suspected hypertension" has damage to the blood vessels, which may indicate the need to treat such patients as having "true hypertension" and needing medication. We believe retinal imaging techniques have multiple uses," he concluded.

At the *International Society of Hypertension* meeting approximately 2000 delegates will hear from 60 invited speakers, including two Nobel Laureates. Themes include the effect of high blood pressure on different population groups, the brain and nervous system, the heart and vascular system, diabetes, the endocrine and renal systems as well as highlighting public health issues including high blood pressure in children, diagnosis and new and emerging treatments.

Hypertension, better known as high blood pressure, affects about one-third of our population. Many don't know they have it, some are managed well with medicines while about 25 per cent don't have the condition under control. High blood pressure is the single biggest contributor to death from a heart attack or stroke.

For further information about the meeting go to <http://www.ish2012.org>

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