Introduction: Hypertension is a leading cause of death in developing countries and more than 80% of deaths from hypertension and associated cardiovascular diseases occur in low- and middle-income countries. Odi Hospital in Gauteng province had a high percentage of uncontrolled hypertensive patients. The study aim was to identify reasons for uncontrolled blood pressure among these hypertensive patients.

Method: A cross-sectional study of hypertensive patients with uncontrolled blood pressure managed at Odi Hospital, Gauteng province, was carried out. Patients aged 30-70 years, on treatment for at least one year, formed the study population of 1920. The study sample was 100 systematically selected uncontrolled hypertensive patients with every second patient recruited.

Results: Females comprised 63% (63/100) and males 37% (female to male ratio of 1.7:1) of the sample. Most of the patients were aged 50-69 years (69%), and 61% were unemployed, of whom 36% were pensioners, 15% received disability grants and families provided support to 10%. Their body mass indices were 24% and 49% for those who were overweight and obese respectively.

Reasons for uncontrolled blood pressure were poor understanding of the disease (77%), poor understanding of benefits and risks of treatment (75%), lack of involvement of patients in their treatment (76%), and side-effects of medication (75%). Other reasons included forgetfulness to take medications (59%), carelessness about taking medications (54%), and memory deficit (53%).

Conclusion: The main reasons for uncontrolled hypertension were lack of knowledge about the disease/benefits of treatment, lack of involvement in their treatment and side-effects of the medications.