

35% of Brazilians Over 40 Are Hypertense. Brazil Wants to Change This

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How and why do hypertension and diabetes mellitus develop? This is one of the questions to be answered by the Longitudinal Polycentric Study of Cardiovascular Disease and Diabetes Mellitus (EMLDCD), also known as the Longitudinal Adult Health Study (ELSA/Brazil).

It will be the largest piece of research on the two diseases ever conducted in Latin America. A consortium composed of seven institutions of higher education will be responsible for the study.

The institutions, chosen through a public convocation, will receive a total of US\$ 9.4 million from the Ministry of Health between now and 2008.

The purpose of the study, however, is to accompany the state of health of approximately 15 thousand individuals for 20 or as long as 30 years.

This is a method known as longitudinal accompaniment. Recruitment of the subjects will begin this month and continue for the next three years. The subjects will be summoned periodically for examinations.

The Ministry of Health will be in charge of coordinating the study, and the budget funds will come from the Ministries of Health and of Science and Technology and the Studies and Projects Finance Agency (FINEP).

According to the Ministry of Health, excluding violence and accidents, hypertension and diabetes are the most common diseases among Brazilians.

Hypertension affects 35% of the Brazilian population over the age of 40, around 12 million people. The index for diabetes mellitus is 11%, which corresponds to nearly 4 million Brazilians in this age bracket.

"If we can establish a definitive program to prevent these diseases, we will not only achieve fantastic savings in resources but will succeed in improving the quality of life of these individuals," affirmed Suzanne Serruya, director of the Ministry of Health's Department of Science and Technology.

The Ministry of Health already runs healthcare programs for victims of hypertension and diabetes. The activities include distribution of free medication, registration of patients, and prevention campaigns. Around US\$ 128 million are spent annually on hospitalizations due to the two diseases.

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