

LAY SUMMARY

In South Africa, it is very common for people to have hypertension. We have found that over half (61%) of adults in the Agincourt Health and Demographic Surveillance System Site (HDSS) have hypertension and in only a few (9%) of those people is the blood pressure well controlled using medication. Hypertension is a chronic condition requiring long term medication but until recently the primary care clinics in South Africa were only organised to deal with short term conditions. The government has recognised the problem and is reorganising clinics to also deal with chronic conditions, such as HIV and hypertension.

We will test whether providing an extra lay health worker, to work alongside the nurses in the clinics focusing on the care of chronic conditions, will help to improve the care of people with hypertension. We will carry out research in eight clinics that provide care to the people living in the Agincourt HDSS. We will randomly choose four clinics where we will provide the lay health workers for 15 months.

We will test the effect of these lay health workers by doing two population surveys of blood pressure, one before we start the intervention and one as soon as we finish. In addition we will set up a clinic/census link so that we can find out which people (age, sex, place of residence, etc.) are using the clinics and whether that changes when the intervention is introduced. We will also carry out a number of interviews with different people during the intervention to identify some of the barriers and facilitators to providing good care of people with hypertension. The finding from this trial will be relevant for improving the care of all chronic diseases.