

Irish Heart Mobile Health Unit Blood Pressure Check Service



Summary Evaluation Report On behalf of Irish Heart

**Diana van Doorn
Dr Noel Richardson
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Executive summary

High blood pressure is a major risk for cardiovascular disease (CVD) and can lead to several cardiovascular events such as a heart attack, heart failure and stroke (World Health Organization, 2013). Cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of death worldwide (World Health Organization, 2017) and in Ireland (Central Statistics Office, 2015).

The World Health Organisation (WHO) states that 80% of premature CVD cases are caused by an unhealthy lifestyle (World Health Organization, 2017). Changes in lifestyle and medical interventions can improve cardiovascular health. Engagement in preventive health behaviours, such as regular blood pressure checks, is crucial to detect hypertension as high blood pressure does not reflect any physical symptoms to which people can react (World Health Organization, 2013).

Irish Heart's Mobile Health Unit - Blood Pressure Check Service

Irish Heart's (IH) Mobile Health Unit (MHU) offers free opportunistic community-based blood pressure checks throughout Ireland on a continuous basis. Participants of the MHU blood pressure service are offered a blood pressure check and brief individual lifestyle advice by an IH nurse based on the motivational interviewing techniques. The nurse is not making a diagnosis; those with a high blood pressure reading are advised to see their GP for further investigation.

Methodology

The evaluation of the MHU blood pressure checks consisted of two phases; (i) baseline information which included the blood pressure check readings taken by the nurse and a face-to-face survey by the principal researcher (Appendix 3); and (ii) a telephone follow-up survey (Appendix 4) at Week 6 conducted by the principal researcher. A total of 268 blood pressure result cards and baseline surveys were analysed.

Evaluation aim

The overall aim of the evaluation was to examine the effectiveness of the MHU in relation to identifying high blood pressure in people unaware and already aware of having high blood pressure and to raise health awareness in relation to the risks for high blood pressure.

Key findings

- *At baseline*

- More than two in five participants (**41.1%**) were found to have **high blood pressure** ($\geq 140/90$ mmHg) based on the first blood pressure reading. More male participants (**51.2%**) were found to have high blood pressure, than female participants (**32.7%**), based on this first blood pressure check.
- Of those who were already aware of having high blood pressure, **63.1%** were found to have high blood pressure during the MHU blood pressure check. Again, this applied to more male (**68.3%**) than female (**58.2%**) participants.
- More than one in three participants (**38.4%**) were **advised by the nurse to see their GP** based on their blood pressure reading. More male (**49.5%**) than female (**29.0%**) participants had received this advice by the nurse.
- More than two in five participants (**43.3%**) were between **45-64 years of age**, while **34.3%** were **65 years or older** and **22.4%** were **younger than 45 years**. When looking at the specific age demographic of **over 50 years**, **67.9%** of participants fell into this age group.

- *At Week 6 follow-up*

- Almost one in two participants (**46.3%**) reported having **acted on the referral advice**. More female (**54.2%**) than male (**41.9%**) participants reported having followed-up with their GP as a result of the MHU blood pressure check.

- *In relation to self-reported measures*

- The vast majority of participants (**75.0%**) reported their **intention to check their blood pressure more regularly** as a result of the MHU blood pressure check.
- Almost one in two participants (**48.3%**) reported **contemplating changes to their lifestyle**. 'Diet' (**61.1%**), 'physical activity' (**52.8%**) and 'stress management' (**18.1%**) were the most reported contemplated changes.

- *In relation to individual experience of the Mobile Health Unit*

- The vast majority of participants (**95.3%**) **rated their experience** with the MHU blood pressure checks as **8 or higher** on a scale of 1-10.
- Most participants reported a '**very good**' or '**excellent**' experience in relation to being able to **talk openly to the nurse** during the blood pressure check (**95.9%**), the **approach of IH staff** (**95.3%**) and the **explanation of the blood pressure check results** (**94.6%**).

Main recommendations

- Over half of referred participants reported not to have followed-up with their GP at 6 Week. It is recommended to conduct more research into best practices in relation to strategies that promote increased adequate follow-up use of health services after health screening interventions.
- One in two participants reported contemplating health behaviour change as a result of the blood pressure check. However, previous research has found that knowledge of health status alone is not enough to prompt individuals to make sustainable health behaviour changes. Linking individuals with local support networks is important to encourage health behaviour change. It is recommended to set-up cooperation between public health interventions such as the MHU blood pressure check service and available local health and support networks to signpost the participants to further support directly after the health intervention.
- The more adverse health outcomes among the male participants in this evaluation are in line with established men's health research. The differences in health outcomes between males and females is acknowledged in Irish health policy which supports the need for more gendered or male friendly approaches to public health promotion interventions. Although the MHU blood pressure check service seemed successful in reaching men, in respect of the adverse outcomes, the real challenge remains to encourage them to follow-up with health services in cases of detected health issues.

Irish Heart

50 Ringsend Road, Dublin 4

Phone: +353 1 668 5001

Fax: +353 1 668 5896

www.irishheart.ie



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For more information on the *Full Report*, contact Marese Damery at mdamery@irishheart.ie