

# HYPERTENSION,

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style of Africa.

"Blacks in the inner cities," he says, "eat a tremendous amount of food high in salt. Blacks in Africa don't have a high sodium level in their diets, and are't subject to the same stresses as black Americans. And African blacks have no more hypertension than whites from the same areas."

Dr. Jeremiah Stamler, professor and chairman of the Department of Medicine at Northwestern University in Chicago, contends: "Hypertension is THE most important disease of black Americans."

The late Dr. John B. Johnson, who at the time of his death last December was director of cardiovascular diseases at Howard University in Washington, D. C., agreed. The famed black cardiologist drew a sharp distinction between sickle cell anemia--an ethnic blood disease which affects blacks almost exclusively--and hypertension: Only one in every 500 black Americans has sickle cell anemia. One hundred in every 500 black Americans have high blood pressure.

He told an American Heart Association panel during the organization's 1972 annual meeting:

"Sickle cell disease is relatively unimportant in comparison to hypertension. Yet, it is recognized, as a public health problem. Venereal disease is less epidemic among Americans black and white. VD, too, is considered a public health problem. Why not hypertension?"

During his long career, Dr. Johnson was a major spokesman in his specialty of cardiology, and throughout the medical and health professions. And before his death at age 60, Dr. Johnson saw evidence that his hears of effort to have hypertension declared a public health problem, and to bring about a significant government effort to detect, treat and control this disease among thousands of hidden hypertensives, had borne fruit.

Last July, the Department of Health, Education and Welfare launched a program to set standards for treatment, to shape an educational program for both the public and the professions and to study the "impact of an expanded hypertension program on the health care delivery system, and (to provide) an assessment of the need for additional resources."

At the beginning of 1973, the HEW launched the initial phase of its program to seek out hidden hypertensives. This action, in a sense, stands as a monument to Dr. Johnson, one of the prime movers in the field of heart diseases. It was Dr. Johnson's hope, and is today the hope of those who carry on his work at Howard University, that the HEW program will eventually provide new clues to the mystery of hypertension, and the mystery within the mystery of hypertension of black Americans.

NEXT: HYPERTENSION: A SILENT AND MYSTERIOUS KILLER

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