



European Heart Network comment to recent JAMA paper on salt, blood pressure and cardiovascular diseases

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In a recent study on hypertension and salt published on 4 May in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, the researchers concluded that their findings “refute the estimates of computer models of lives saved and health care costs reduced with lower salt intake. They do also not support the current recommendations of a generalized and indiscriminate reduction of salt intake at the population level.”

Hitting the headlines in the media, the study has been heavily criticised by many experts on salt and its health effects including by a comment in the *Lancet* published on 14 May 2011.

The *Lancet* comment, referring to other experts’ analyses, points to several weaknesses in the study. Main criticism is the size of the study which has low event rates and relatively young participants.

The *Lancet* comment points to other weaknesses:

- unreliable measurement of sodium intake
- failure to account for key factors that influence sodium intake and heart disease risk
- missing or incomplete urine data from large numbers of participants (in fact, the study measured participants' salt intake by just one calculation of urinary sodium excretion at the start)

We agree with the *Lancet* comment that the study may well confuse public perceptions of the importance of salt as a risk factor for high blood pressure, heart disease, and stroke. We also agree with the *Lancet* comment that “*It is dangerous to jump to conclusions on the basis of single studies and ignore the totality of evidence. At a time when CVD is the world's leading cause of death and excess dietary sodium has convincingly been shown to be a serious public health hazard, the results of this work should neither change thinking nor practice.*”