Systolic blood pressure and effects on threat appraisal and risk behavior

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Resting systolic blood pressure (mmHG) and risk behavior score was taken in 88 healthy young adults. Blood pressure was recorded over two, eight minute resting periods, one at the beginning of the study, and one at the end using a GE Dinamap Pro 100v2. Risk behavior was assessed using a modified Youth Risk Behavior Survey that gauged activity in various risky categories. Questions appealing to those under 18 years old were eliminated based on the participant age range. Total risk was assessed on a scale of 0-1 where 1 represents the most risk-prone person and 0 represents the least risk prone person.

The results indicate that the young adults who may be at risk for hypertension later in life partake in more risky behavior as seen in figure 2. According to Lazarus’s model as outlined on the left side of Figure 1, emotional dampening leads to decreased threat appraisal, which leads to a decreased motivation to avoid risk, which then leads to an increase in risk taking behavior. Furthermore, people with increased resting blood pressure early in life are at a greater risk for hypertension later in life. If this increase in risk taking behavior is bidirectionally connected to a central nervous system imbalance that also effects the resting BP setpoint and general affect (as shown in Figure 1), a treatment for one of these issues may correct the root imbalance and proactively lower the risk for hypertension later in life. Considering hypertension is a significant risk factor for coronary heart disease, and that coronary heart disease is the number one killer of men and women in the United states, this proactive treatment could save lives.