

## **PRESS RELEASE**

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### **Hypertension more frequent in persons who lost a family member in war**

ZAGREB – Family members of soldiers killed during the War in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BH) suffer from hypertension more frequently than their neighbors, shows a study published in the Croatian Medical Journal.

The study, conducted in the West Herzegovina County, included 1144 persons who lost a close relative in the 1991-1995 war, and 582 of their neighbors who did not experience such a loss. Blood pressure of all participants was measured two times – in 1996 and 2003 – to detect possible changes in course of time. The proportion of people with hypertension at both time points was higher in the group with a killed family member (55% in 1996 and 51% in 2003) than in the group without the loss (42% in 1996 and 39% in 2003). The study showed that the frequency of hypertension decreased with time in family members of killed soldiers, but not in other participants. This is an indication that the stress of losing a family member can be, at least partially, associated with the development of hypertension. The fact that the prevalence of hypertension in the group with a killed family member decreased over time, can perhaps be explained by the beneficial effect of time on psychological basis of hypertension.

Two groups of participants were also different in other health indicators. Posttraumatic stress disorder, smoking and alcohol misuse were more common among family members of killed soldiers, but there were no differences among two groups in the level of blood lipids.

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