SUMMARY

Background

Cardiovascular disease is the most frequent diagnosis in elderly people and is the leading cause of death in both men and women older than 65 years in the developed world, and there is growing evidence that a similar epidemic is inevitable for the developing world, if current trends continue unchecked. The profile of these cardiovascular diseases and their presentation differs from that in the younger patients, as well as high morbidity and mortality as compared to the younger population. There are scarce local data as to the pattern of cardiovascular diseases in elderly in our environment. This study was conducted to determine the proportion of different cardiovascular diseases in the elderly as a whole, the proportion of different cardiovascular diseases among the subgroups of the elderly and the sex distribution pattern.

Method

Two hundred elderly patients aged 60 years and above presenting at the Cardiac Care Unit, department of medicine, Obafemi Awolowo University Teaching Hospitals Complex, Ile-Ife were enrolled for this study, and 100 age and sex matched normal elderly subjects were studied. Basic demographic data, as well as traditional clinical examination were
performed. Routine laboratory investigations for cardiovascular disease including FBC/ESR, FBS/2HPP, fasting lipid profiles, E&U/Cr, uric acid, chest radiography, electrocardiography, and echocardiography, were performed to logically arrive at diagnosis.

**Result**

There is a high frequency of heart failure (47%), hypertension (38.5%) and stroke (8%) in elderly patients aged 60 years and above, with arrhythmia (5%) and degenerative calcific valvular heart disease (5%) more common in age ≥ 75 years and above. Majority of the cardiovascular diseases are more common in males - heart failure (52.1%, P=0.249), hypertension (57.1%, P=0.045), stroke (62.5%, P=0.018), sinus node dysfunction (3%, P=0.000) and pulmonary embolism (2%, P=0.000) - while cardiomyopathy (58.3%, P=0.043) and unstable angina (100%, P=0.000) are commoner in females. Significant difference occurs in age related findings between elderly with cardiovascular diseases and control (P<0.05).

**Conclusion:**

Heart failure, hypertension and stroke constitute about 93.5% of cardiovascular diseases found in elderly patients presenting at the Cardiac Care Unit of Obafemi Awolowo University Teaching Hospitals Complex, Ile-Ife. Arrhythmias due to conduction abnormalities; sclerosis and degenerative calcific valvular heart disease; and ischaemic
heart disease predominate in the elderly patients of 75 years and above, and large proportions of the cardiovascular diseases were of higher frequency in males such as heart failure, hypertension, stroke, sinus node dysfunction, and pulmonary embolism; while heart failure due to cardiomyopathy as well as unstable angina are commoner in females. Valvular heart diseases occur with similar frequency in males and females.