

# Many medical students shaky on how to measure BP. There's a fix.

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Some 116 million Americans—more than one-third of the U.S. population—have high blood pressure and less than half of them have it controlled to their goal. One of the big reasons for the latter: inaccurate BP measurement in clinical settings and at home.

This should come as no surprise, though, since health professions schools do not always offer an evidence-based, standardized training for students in year one, nor do they consistently provide training in self-measured BP (SMBP). Moreover, BP measurement is a skill that decays quickly—in just a few months—yet many health professions schools offer no refresher courses at all after students' initial training.

A recent webinar explores a new online training module, “BP Measurement Essentials: Student Edition,” developed by the AMA, that can improve health care students' initial BP-measurement skills and also keep their knowledge sharp in residency and beyond.

The AMA has developed online tools and resources created using the latest evidence-based information to support physicians to help manage their patients' high BP. These resources are available to all physicians and health systems as part of Target: BP™, a national initiative co-led by the AMA and American Heart Association.

## Two big goals

The AMA's goals with the module are to ensure every health care student within the U.S. is competently trained on accurate BP measurement and to get a standardized, robust BP-measurement module series adopted across health care schools nationwide.

Many medical students are not properly trained in BP measurement, said Kate Kirley, MD, the AMA's director of chronic disease prevention. As evidence, she pointed to the results of a test she and her

colleagues administered with 159 medical students that checked their performance on 11 key BP-measurement skills.

“The average score on these 11 possible skills was 4.1 out of 11,” she said, “and we only had one student who actually got a perfect score, 100%.”

“BP Measurement Essentials: Student Edition,” is a 40-minute e-learning module designed to teach all health care students the fundamentals of blood pressure measurement. It’s complemented by both a 10-minute refresher and a 15-minute training on SMBP essentials.

It ensures students are learning the latest evidence-based techniques from the same curriculum as their peers and future care team members by providing instruction on:

- The importance of accurate BP measurement.
- The basic concepts of BP measurement.
- Equipment used to measure BP and their key features.
- How to properly prepare and position a patient for BP measurements.
- How to perform BP measurements on a manual, semi-automated and automated office BP device.
- The categories of BP.
- What SMBP is.
- The importance of SMBP and how it can be used to diagnose and manage hypertension.
- Equipment used for SMBP.
- How to perform SMBP and document the measurements.

The AMA partnered with University of North Dakota’s medical and nursing schools to beta test the initial e-learning module and found it improved student knowledge and skills in several key areas: the factors that influence a blood pressure reading, cuff sizing and placement, what to do with a first-time patient versus a returning patient, and measurement protocol.

The CME module, “BP Measurement Essentials: Student Edition,” is enduring material and designated by the AMA for a maximum of 1 AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™. Related modules—“Self-Measured Blood Pressure Essentials: Student Edition” and “BP Measurement Refresher: Student Edition”—also are available.

The module is part of the AMA EdHub™, an online platform with high-quality CME and education that supports the professional development needs of physicians and other health professionals. With topics relevant to you, it also offers an easy, streamlined way to find, take, track and report educational activities.

Learn more about AMA CME accreditation.