

A prospective study to determine the prevalence and profile of cardiovascular disease in elderly patients admitted into the medical wards, Kenyatta National Hospital, was carried out between July 1991 and January 1992. Two hundred and two patients over 60 years of age were admitted into the medical wards over this period. This formed seven per cent of the total medical admissions. Two of these refused to take part in the study. Of the 200 elderly patients evaluated for cardiovascular disease, 146 (73%) were between 60 and 75 years of age with only 26 (13%) being over 85 years. Fifty seven per cent were males. Clinical evidence of cardiovascular disease was present in 79 (39.5%) of the patients evaluated. There was no sex difference in the prevalence of cardiovascular disease as judged from clinical evaluation (37.7% males versus 41.9% females, $p > 0.05$). Cardiovascular diseases in our medical in-patients at Kenyatta National Hospital are common and especially so with hypertension which plays an important role in the aetiology of congestive heart failure and cerebrovascular accidents. Cardiac arrhythmias are also common though not necessarily symptomatic. Rheumatic heart disease and cardiomyopathies were uncommon in our study population. A community-based survey is needed to determine the true prevalence of cardiovascular diseases in the elderly and their contribution to morbidity in this sector of the population.