Primary Prevention of Hypertension – Mission (im)possible?

For more than 25 years, the objectives of the WHL are to promote the detection, control and prevention of arterial hypertension in populations. For more than 10 years I have, as editor of the WHL Newsletter, supported this organization in accomplishing its mission. Now, concluding my function as editor, to look back on what has been achieved and on what the challenges for the future are imposes upon me.

Hypertension remains to be an important public health threat. According to WHO data, hypertension related morbidities such as coronary heart disease and stroke are leading causes of death in high, middle, and increasingly also in low income countries [1]. A very recent publication in “The Lancet” describes hypertension as the leading risk factor for stroke, with a population attributable risk of 34.6 % [2]. In addition, the public health burden related to elevated blood pressure (BP) has increased since the cut-off value for optimal BP has been lowered. Hence, WHO has ranked high BP a leading risk factor. Clearly, these figures are no good news, and it seems as if the need for preventive measures has even increased since WHL’s foundation in 1984.

On the other hand, efforts to combat this epidemic have also grown considerably. First of all, there is clear evidence for the efficacy of non-pharmacologic interventions, as demonstrated in clinical trials such as the DASH-Study [3].

Report from the World Hypertension Day 2010

On May 17, 2010 WHL and its member leagues celebrated the 6th World Hypertension Day (WHD). The WHD was initially launched in 2005 as an initiative of WHL. Worldwide rallies, public awareness campaigns, scientific exchanges and media communications were held in many parts of the world, similar to the successful WHDs in the previous years.

Creating awareness among the public worldwide and to highlight the serious medical complications of this condition and to communicate to the public information on prevention, detection, treatment and control are the purposes of the World Hypertension Day. Every year, May 17th is designated as the WHD. It is celebrated worldwide by WHL National Members to raise public, professional and political awareness of

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Therefore, the field of public health has been increasingly dealing with research questions regarding the effectiveness and efficiency of preventive measures. A count of publications in the online database PubMed underlines this: up to a doubling of publications related to hypertension and primary prevention, public health, and community prevention can be observed (table 1).

Table 1: Number of publications dealing with hypertension and selected terms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypertension AND search term:</th>
<th>Number of publications between 1990 and 2000</th>
<th>2000 and 2010</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary prevention</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>328</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community prevention</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>401</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public health practise</td>
<td>642</td>
<td>1265</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public health</td>
<td>18,648</td>
<td>29,988</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There are various options for public health strategies aiming to reduce population BP levels and hypertension incidence. One approach is to promote public health messages by using mass media campaigns.

WHL engages actively in this: The launch of World Hypertension Day (WHD), for example, is to be looked at as such an approach [4]. The various activities of the national leagues illustrate the wide variety of activities to increase public awareness, to distribute information, to influence individual behavior, and to advocate health related political issues. But are such activities effective, are they able to influence public health with their messages? Numerous studies have addressed this important question and systematic reviews and meta-analyses allow drawing a positive conclusion [5-8]. It appears that at least modest behavioral changes can be induced by mass media campaigns. Further improvement of the effectiveness might be achieved by developing more comprehensive, ecological approaches which address both the individual and its environment [7]. Worksite interventions that activate social support and change environments to enhance behavioral changes could be such an advanced strategy. WHL currently engages in a multi-national worksite project [9] thereby demonstrating its topical activities.

Another key issue in public health is communication [10]. This does not only apply for communication between professionals and the public, but also for the communication between professionals. Prerequisites for a good communication are on the one hand communication tools. WHL can proudly look back on a continuous publication serial of its WHL Newsletter which aims to support exchange of information between health care professionals worldwide, offering the opportunity to receive information on activities and to get in contact.

The WHL Newsletter is supported by a continuously improved WHL website. Since consumer acceptance of modern communication technology also in the health context is rising [11], WHL should make increasingly use of this tool and its technological advances.

Communication also requires trust between the sender of messages and the recipient. Social trust has been identified as an important prerequisite in risk communication [12, 13]. WHL as an independent international non-profit organization with strong relations to WHO and other health related non-profit organizations is in the position of being a trustworthy authority with respect to hypertension prevention and control. This treasure should be guarded jealously.

In conclusion, the challenges of WHL’s mission remain to be immense. However, over the years, this internationally acting liaison organization has developed a strong capacity in addressing its mission. Therefore, “mission possible”, but its accomplishment requires continuous efforts and keen engagement of its members and supporters.

Prof. Anja Kroke

References:
hypertension and its consequence to the health of the individuals and to reduce social and economic burden at the regional, provincial and national level. The theme for this year was “Healthy Weight – Healthy Blood Pressure” (figure 1). This theme emphasizes the importance of being aware of overweight/obesity and to take responsibility for self health. Being overweight can lead to hypertension. The WHD information booklets included basic information about hypertension, overweight, childhood obesity, calculating the body mass index (BMI), diet and lifestyle. The WHL member countries adopted this information and created public awareness in their countries through different venues and modalities.

WHL 2010 was very successful in fulfilling the general sense of the theme. Through our national partners we reached out to several hundred millions of people and heightened the awareness and actions to address increased body weight and hypertension. WHL is looking forward to continue with its mission through WHD in the upcoming WHD 2011 with a new theme. For more information please visit www.worldhypertensionleague.org.

Dr. Arun Chockalingam
Secretary General, WHL

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**WHL News**

WHL and the Chinese Hypertension League (CHL) will hold the joint symposium “Traditional Chinese Medicine in the Control of Hypertension” at the ISH Conference in Vancouver.

**Date:** September 26th, 09:00-11:30  
**Location:** West Meeting Room 109-110  
Vancouver Convention Centre  
1055 Canada Place  
Vancouver, BC, V6C 0C3, Canada

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**New Book Release**

**Evidence-based management of hypertension**  
Edited by Matthew R Weir, MD  
Division of Nephrology, University of Maryland Baltimore, MD, USA  
TFM PUBLISHING LTD, UK  
Hardback: 242pp, GBP 50 / USD 99 / EUR 175  
ISBN: 978 1 903378 72 4

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**People**

Dr. Jyh-Hong Chen has been elected President of the **Taiwan Society of Cardiology** for the period June 2010 to June 2012. Dr. Shing-Jong Lin is the first Vice-President and Dr. San-Jou Yeh is the second Vice President. Secretary General is Dr. Jun-Jack Cheng. The mailing address is: 13F-1, No. 11, Min-Chuan West Road, Taipei 104, Taiwan.

Phone: (+886-2) 259-761 77  
Fax: (+886-2) 259 761 80  
E-mail: tsoc@tsoc.org.tw  
Website: http://www.tsoc.org.tw

On May 18, 2010, the board of the **Hellenic Society of Hypertension** changed. Professor A. Lasaridis is President, Dres. A. Tourkantonis, P. Toutouzas, N. Lefkos and V. Votteas are Vice Presidents and Professor Chr. Zamboulis is Secretary General. The mailing address of the Society is: Vas. Sofias Ave. 111, 2nd Floor, 115 27 Athens, Greece.

Phone: (+30-210) 646 9358  
Fax: (+30-210) 640 0767  
E-mail: gramatia@hypertasi.gr

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People continued

Professor Mark Caulfield has been elected President of the British Hypertension Society until September 2011. Jackie Howarth remains Administrative Officer. The address is: Leicester Royal Infirmary, Clinical Sciences Building, Level 5, PO Box 65, Leicester, LE2 7LX, UK.

Phone: (+44-7717) 467973
E-mail: bhs@le.ac.uk
Website: http://www.bhsoc.org

Electronic Newsletter Delivery

http://www.worldhypertensionleague.org

Impressum
The objectives of the WHL are to promote the detection, control and prevention of arterial hypertension in populations. The World Hypertension League (WHL) is a federation of leagues, societies and other national bodies devoted to this goal. Individual membership is not possible. The WHL is a division of the International Society of Hypertension (ISH), and is in official relations with the World Health Organization (WHO).

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Calendar

23rd Scientific Meeting of the International Society of Hypertension
September 26-30, 2010
Vancouver, Canada
Information: Sea to Sky Meeting Management
Suite 206, 201 Bewicke Avenue
North Vancouver, BC
Canada V7M 3M7
Fax: (+1-604) 984-6434
Website: http://vancouverhypertension2010.com

2nd World Health Summit
“Transition – Translation – Transformation”
Presidents: Prof. D. Ganten (Charité, Berlin) and Prof. S. Smith (Imperial College, London)
October 10-13, 2010
Berlin, Germany
Information: Simone Leiske, KIT Group
E-mail: secretariat@worldhealthsummit.org
Website: http://www.worldhealthsummit.org

33rd Annual Scientific Meeting of the Japanese Society of Hypertension
October 15-17, 2010
Fukuoka, Japan
Information: Convention Linkage
1-3-6 Hakata-ekiminami, Hakata-ku, Fukuoka 812-0016, Japan
Fax: (+81-92) 437-4181
E-mail: jsh33@c-linkage.co.jp

3rd Conference on Fixed Combination in the Treatment of Hypertension, Dyslipidemia and Diabetes Mellitus
Brisbane, Australia
November 18-20, 2010
Information: Paragon Conventions
18 Ave Louis-Casai, 5th Floor
1209 Geneva, Switzerland
E-mail: fixed2010@fixedcombination.com

30th Journées de l’Hypertension Artérielle and 4th International Meeting of the French Society of Hypertension
December 16-17, 2010
Paris, France
Information: AIM France SAS, 29-31 Rue de l’Espérance, 75013 Paris, France
Fax: (+33-1) 4078 3810
E-mail: jhta@aim.france.fr