January - June 2014 Update

The World Hypertension League (WHL), a coalition of national hypertension organizations, has a mission to lead and enhance efforts to prevent and control hypertension globally. The importance of the WHL mission is emphasized by the recent United Nations (UN) Global Health Summit on non-communicable diseases (NCDs) which agreed to nine health targets to be achieved by 2025. The UN health targets include a 25% reduction in the prevalence of uncontrolled hypertension and a 30% reduction in dietary salt. Further, the Global Burden of Disease Study estimated that 18% of premature deaths and 7% of global disability are related to increased blood pressure placing particular importance on the work of the WHL. Critical to the mandate of the WHL is strong collaboration and working relations with the International Society of Hypertension (ISH) and the World Health Organization (WHO).

The WHL is currently transitioning to be better positioned to help address the United Nations NCD targets as they relate to blood pressure. New WHL by-laws have been adopted that incorporate a Chief Executive Officer (CEO), and a Treasurer on the Executive. Notably, the WHL office is moving to the United States, the location of Dr Mark Niebylski, the WHL CEO. The by-laws also provide greater authority to the council of WHL member organizations while allowing for board members to be selected based on skills including individuals outside the council membership. New members of the WHL board have been chosen to ensure all major global regions are represented. The WHL is also looking to increase its impact by having regional offices that can address language, culture and regional circumstances. On May 17th 2014 a Chinese regional office of the WHL was opened. In addition, considerable efforts have been made to recruit new WHL members and to ensure the WHL is able to engage and to communicate with all its member organizations. The WHL is pleased to announce the addition of five new members in 2014. We extend a warm welcome to four new Full members: the Azerbaijan Heart & Health Association (Website: http://ahha.az/en/main/), the Consortium for Southeastern Hypertension Control (Website: http://www.cosehc.org/V2/Home.aspx), the Puerto Rico Nephrology Society, and the Russian Society of Hypertension (Website: www.gipertonik.ru) and one new Associate member: HeartReach (working in Haiti out of South Carolina, USA). We
anticipate additional members to be added in the coming months and thank those who re-affirmed membership.

The WHL executive has recently published a strategic approach to hypertension prevention and control that it encourages national organizations to follow (1). It has also conducted a needs assessment of national member organizations to identify opportunities to target (2). The WHL will be prioritizing: 1) reductions in dietary salt, 2) improving the awareness rate of hypertension, and 3) promoting the integration of hypertension management into chronic non communicable disease programs, specifically the WHO Package of Essential Non-communicable (PEN) Disease Interventions for Primary Health Care in Low-Resource Settings program (3).

The WHL (with the ISH and other organizations) has developed a policy statement on dietary salt (4), and an action-oriented fact sheet related to dietary salt (5). To address an emerging issue that low quality research is creating controversy and undermining efforts to reduce dietary salt (6), the WHL has responded by leading a call for quality research and the setting of research standards (7). An international coalition is currently being formed by the WHL to develop standards for the conduct of clinical and population research on dietary salt, regular systematic reviews of evidence and, if required, updating dietary salt recommendations. The WHL will further aid national organizations to promote the WHL policy on dietary salt and will be developing standardized power point slides to aid knowledge translation efforts. An expert group under the WHL has also developed suggested terminology to describe dietary salt intake and reductions in dietary salt to promote the use of common terminology (8).

Individuals and organizations active in efforts to reduce dietary salt at the population level can be nominated for certificates of notable achievement or awards of excellence with the inaugural recognition being granted in 2014. Leaders of the global effort to reduce dietary salt Drs. Graham MacGregor and Derek Denton were the first recipients of awards of excellence. They along with the inaugural recipients of notable achievement in dietary salt reduction are recognized on the website (Available online: http://www.whleague.org/images/WHL_2014_Notable_Achievement_Awardees_in_Dietary_Salt_Reduction.pdf).

The WHL has also been active in assisting standardization and promotion of screening programs for blood pressure. A WHL work group has just developed a resource to aid blood pressure screening programs develop (available online: http://www.whleague.org/index.php/j-stuff/blood-pressure-assessment-train-the-trainer). The workgroup was successful in obtaining a grant to field test the resource in Brazil, Cameroon, and Canada. The resource will be revised in 2015 based on field test results and feedback from end users and hopefully made available to all members. To promote screening accuracy, the WHL
just developed a policy statement on blood pressure measurement devices in a clinical or community setting (9). Meanwhile, a separate WHL workgroup has developed standards for analyzing blood pressure surveys (10). This effort is intended to aid the tracking of efforts to prevent and control hypertension over time and in different jurisdictions as often surveys are analyzed using non-comparable methods. With the ISH, the WHL has developed an action-oriented fact sheet for hypertension and will be aiding national organizations develop similar fact sheets specific to their population (11). Individuals and organizations active in efforts to prevent and control hypertension control at the population level can also be nominated for certificates of notable achievement or certificates of excellence with the inaugural recognition being granted in 2014. Dr. Kikuo Arakawa was the first recipient of the excellence award in hypertension control and the inaugural recipients of notable achievement in hypertension control are recognized on the website (Available online: http://www.whleague.org/images/WHL_2014_Notable_Achievement_Awardees_in_Hypertension.pdf)

A policy statement to support integration of hypertension management into chronic disease management programs and a work group to aid national hypertension organizations to assist in that integration is in an early planning phase.

The topic for World Hypertension Day (WHD) held May 17th has been allocated to increase awareness of hypertension for the next four years. The plans are to utilize WHD to impact the very high rate of people being unaware of having hypertension. The day will heavily promote the need for community and clinical screening for hypertension and the short term plan is to have one million people having blood pressure screened for May 17th 2015. There were over 300,000 screened during the week leading up to May 17th 2014 as summarized in a draft report (available online: http://www.whleague.org/index.php/j-stuff/world-hypertension-day-report-draft).

In addition to the WHD outreach and activities, extensive efforts have been made to increase communications from the WHL. A regular newsletter is being promoted with plans to increase its circulation and the WHL has a new website (www.whleague.org). A long range congress planning committee has been developed to facilitate prevention and control of hypertension with member organizations and individuals. Perhaps most importantly, the WHL now has an official journal, namely ‘The Journal of Clinical Hypertension’ (JCH), that provides global access to high quality peer reviewed literature (12). The WHL encourages all people interested in hypertension to sign up for free access and for members and partners to consider submitting manuscripts to the journal for publication under the WHL-JCH umbrella (http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/10.1111/(ISSN)1751-7176). The WHL will make
every effort to alert members and partners on any new publications the moment they are available on JCH’s Early View.

The WHL currently faces financial challenges but believes its future is bright and that through collaborative action the burden of blood pressure disease can be markedly reduced. ISH members are encouraged to support the WHL, especially if asked to join and support its work groups. Together, we will achieve our mission and mandate while sharing a strong vision, commitment, and values.

This summary update is similar to a report that is being published in the ISH newsletter. For more information on any of these exciting efforts, please e-mail: CEO@whleague.org or visit the WHL website.

WHL Executive:
Norm Campbell MD President
Mark Niebylski PhD, MBA Chief Executive Officer
Dan Lackland D.PH, Vice President & President-Elect
Liu Lisheng MD, Past President
Xin-Hua Zhang MD, Secretary General
Peter Nillson MD, Treasurer

Reference List


(5) Campbell NRC, Niebylski M, Lackland DT, WHL Executive. 2014 Dietary salt fact sheet of the World Hypertension League, International Society of Hypertension,


