News from the World Hypertension League (WHL).
A division of the International Society of Hypertension, and in official relations with the
World Health Organization.

No. 110, December 2006

Editorial

Invitation to join WASH
(World Action on Salt and Health)

We are currently seeking more members, we already have 180, to join WASH (World Action on Salt and Health). The rationale for WASH is set out briefly below:

Cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of death and disability in the world and raised blood pressure (BP) from a systolic BP above 115 mmHg is one of the most important direct causes, accounting for more than 60% of all strokes and approximately 50% of all heart disease. This rise in BP is due to an excess of salt in our diet, too little potassium, obesity and lack of exercise. Our high salt intake is a major cause of elevated BP and the evidence demonstrating this is very strong, coming from epidemiology, migration, intervention, treatment trials, animal and genetic studies. Based on this evidence, governments and the WHO have recommended a reduction in salt intake from the current worldwide intake of 10 to 15 g/day to a maximum of 5 to 6 g/day. The benefits of this modest reduction in salt intake are large. For instance, a reduction in salt intake of 6 g/day through the fall in BP that would occur, would cause an approximate 25% reduction in stroke and a 20% reduction in coronary heart disease mortality, e.g. in the UK, there would be 70,000 less stroke and heart attacks per year.

Salt intake in most countries in the world is passive, i.e. it is added to food without our consent and, very often, without the knowledge of consumers. It is so ubiquitous now that it is difficult to avoid it, accounting for 80% of many coun-

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WHL News

On September 30, 2006, during the XXIII Congress of the Italian Society of Hypertension in Rome, the Italian Hypertension League and the Italian Society of Hypertension approved to join into a new institution named "ITALIAN SOCIETY AND LEAGUE OF HYPERTENSION".

The Italian Hypertension League, founded in 1975, was among the oldest members of the WHL. A few years later, the Italian Society of Hypertension was founded in 1982, mainly with the purpose to promote scientific research in the field of hypertension. Both institutions, however, have been working always in tight cooperation. Since all members of the Italian Hypertension League are physicians who are contemporary members of the Italian Society of Hypertension, and considering also that the purposes of the two institutions are complementary, being the Society mainly scientific and the League mainly educational, both executive committees decided to fuse into a unique institution. The Italian Society and League of Hypertension will continue to work according to the goals and objectives of the World Hypertension League to which we are honoured to belong.

Prof. Alessandro Rappelli
Former President
Italian Hypertension League

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tried’salt intake. The only way to tackle this is by a slow reduction in the concentration of salt in all foods where it has been added. Studies by the WHO have shown that reducing population salt intake by this approach is one of the most cost effective strategies for improving health and has the great attraction, from a public health perspective, that it does not necessarily involve a change in the public’s consumption of foods.

This strategy has been adopted in the UK and salt concentration in nearly all categories of food is falling. This illustrates that it is possible to reduce the salt concentration of nearly all foods and this public health strategy now needs to be spread out worldwide. In countries where the major source of salt is added in the cooking and at the table, a different strategy needs to be adopted. Therefore, to encourage action on salt worldwide, we have set up a World Action group (WASH) based on the model that was developed in the UK of CASH (the Consensus Action on Salt and Health): www.actiononsalt.org.uk. CASH consists of leading BP experts in the UK as well as food technologists and individuals involved in food policy, etc, and has been very successful in raising awareness of the importance of salt and has largely been responsible for determining the Department of Health and Food Standards Agency current policy on salt reduction.

WASH, like CASH, will be an informal organization but very much led by individual members in each country who, ideally, would be able to set up their own organizations similar to CASH or whatever organization they felt was most appropriate to their country. There is no doubt that a leading group of worldwide experts could have enormous influence on the media and food industry. For instance, it would be easy to pressure large multi-national food companies into reducing salt as they are in the UK, since it is clearly illogical to be reducing salt concentration of foods in one country and not others. Individual members or groups of members of WASH could approach each country’s individual ministry of health and other appropriate organizations to gain further support and put pressure on that country’s food industry to reduce the salt concentration of food. At the same time WASH will work closely with the WHO and has already stimulated a new initiative by the WHO to take a more coherent strategy towards salt reduction worldwide.

WASH currently has 180 members from 43 countries composed of experts in high BP, nutrition, public health etc. The official launch of WASH was in October 2006. We are now seeking more like-minded individuals who would like to become members of WASH. If you would like further information, please contact Naomi Campbell (ncampbel@sgul.ac.uk) who is currently overseeing the activities of WASH.

Joining WASH will mean that:
- Your name will be listed as a member on the WASH website.
- It will not involve you in anything further than this unless you wish to, although we would welcome your active participation.
- You will be kept up to date via our newsletter and e-mails and we can already send you a report of activities so far.

It is vital we get as many members as possible as this is likely to influence both the WHO, individual ministries of health in each country and the food industry. We really count on your help and backing and, if possible, your active participation.

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World Hypertension Day 2006

Activity Report from Iran

Cardiovascular diseases (CVD) are the leading cause of premature death worldwide. The ten-year trend of hypertension in Isfahan, Iran, showed a decrease in the prevalence of hypertension between 1991 and 2001 (20.8% in 1991, 17.5% in 2000). However, among 50% of hypertensive individuals who are aware of their condition, blood pressure is controlled only in 34%. On the occasion of the World Hypertension Day 2006, the Isfahan Cardiovascular Research Center organized a 10-day awareness campaign on ‘Hypertension and its treatment and control’.

The goal of this campaign were: (i) Increasing the patients’ awareness of hypertension; (ii) Increasing the awareness of hypertensive individuals about hypertension; (iii) Increasing the awareness of high-risk individuals about hypertension; (iv) Increasing the awareness of health personnel about treatment and control of hypertension; (v) Increasing the awareness of physicians and nurses about treatment and control of hypertension; (vi) Decreasing the number of hypertensive individuals lacking awareness of their condition.

Several strategies were followed and various activities applied to reach these goals:

- Face-to-face education
- Classes for hypertensive patients and families
- Organization of physical activities
- BP measurement camps at work sites and central city spots
- Free blood pressure measurements camp in Sio-Sepol-Park
- Distribution of educational pamphlets
- One-day seminar about latest hypertension-related developments for physicians, nurses and health experts
- One-hour TV medical talk show
- Presentations at Friday Prayers
- Posting of information material in public areas
- Posting of information on the website
- Publishing of an article (“Nine steps toward hypertension control”) in local journals

Further details on these activities can be found on the WHL website.

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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

4th Asia-Oceania Conference on Obesity
February 9–11, 2007
Seoul, Korea
Information: Conference Secretariat
1F Haeoreum Bldg.
748-5 Yocksam-dong
Kangnam-ku, Seoul 135-080, Korea
Fax: (+82-2)-566-6087
e-mail: seoul@obesity2007.org

Training Course on Non-Communicable Disease Prevention and Health Promotion
April 15–21, 2007
Isfahan, Iran
Information: Prof. Nizal Sarraf-Zadegan,
Isfahan Cardiovascular Research Center (ICRC)
PO Box 81465–1148, Isfahan, Tehran, Iran
E-mail: sarrafzadegan@med.mui.ac.ir

8th AHA Scientific Forum on Quality of Care and Outcomes Research in Cardiovascular Disease and Stroke Conference
May 9–11, 2007
Washington, DC, USA
Information: AHA,
7272 Greenville Avenue
Dallas, TX 75231, USA
E-mail: scientificconferences@heart.org

17th European Meeting on Hypertension
June 15–19, 2007
Milan, Italy
Information: AISC & MGR – Aim Group
Rome Office: Via A. Ristori 38
I-00197 Rome, Italy
Fax: (+39-06) 808 8491
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61st Annual Fall Conference and Scientific Sessions of the Council for High Blood Pressure Research
September 24–30, 2007
Tucson, AZ, USA
Information: Anita Lara, c/o AHA
7272 Greenville Avenue
Dallas, TX 75231, USA
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