Another Newsletter, Another League?

Another newsletter, another league? This is the outcry we anticipate, especially at our reader’s first encounter with WHL. Therefore, since prevention is better than cure, let us prevent such an unfavourable reaction by introducing ourselves.

In the early and mid-1970s a number of national organizations were established with the aim of promoting the control of hypertension in their communities. These bodies acted more or less in isolation in different countries. To remedy this situation, the late Prof. Franz Gross, then Chairman of the German Hypertension League and Prof. Cesare Bartorelli, President of the Italian Hypertension League in consultation with the World Health Organization, fathered the idea of establishing a liaison office among the national organizations. In 1984, after a 7-year gestation period, the World Hypertension League (WHL) was born. At that time, it had 7 member organizations. Today, only 4 years later, WHL’s membership includes 26 national organizations, and is steadily increasing.

WHL has no individual members; we are a federation of national leagues, societies, foundations, committees and other organizations concerned with the detection and treatment of hypertension.

WHL will hold an International Patient Education Workshop on December 1 and 2 in Tel Aviv, Israel. The purpose is to discuss the scientific bases of patient education, to review the methods applied at present in various countries, to outline appropriate programs, and to develop recommendations on how to improve patient education by the practicing physician. The motto is: “Teaching the teacher” (see calendar).

The 1988 Council Meeting of WHL with delegates from 26 national member organizations will be held on December 3, in Tel Aviv.

The investigators of the WHO/WHL Hypertension Management Audit Project will meet on December 4 in Tel Aviv. The program includes presentation and discussion of the results of this international cooperative project on the status of Hypertension control in various countries in Europe.

The Third International Symposium of Hypertension in the Community, organized by the Israel Hypertension Society will take place from December 4 to 8, also in Tel Aviv (see calendar).

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arterial hypertension in populations. Unlike the International Society of Hypertension, WHL is not an association of scientists. Our aim is the advancement of hypertension control worldwide, through the coordinated efforts of our many diverse member organizations. The term “League” was chosen to suggest this joining of forces. Specifically, WHL assists in an exchange of information and of experience among national bodies, stimulates the establishment of new organizations in countries where they do not exist, and above all, promotes multilateral contacts on the international level. Collaboration with the International Society of Hypertension and with WHO are further important activities of the League. To cite some examples, in 1987 WHL organized a symposium on hypertension control in developing countries, with special reference to Africa. The League co-operates with WHO on an international project for the assessment of the incidence and management of hypertension in many different communities worldwide. Periodically, WHL publishes statements and recommendations concerning the control of hypertension, e.g. on the value of self-measurement of blood pressure, on obesity and hypertension and on physical activity in hypertension. These standards are intended to be universally applicable. An international workshop on patient education is being planned for December 1988, with an ensuing publication.

Above all, the League is committed to the fostering of contacts, among people and among organizations. Meetings, though important, are not necessarily the best way of achieving this aim. We hope our newly born Newsletter will develop into a solid vehicle of information, perhaps the prime instrument for bringing together all those aiming to promote hypertension control in the world. This is its raison d'être, and it is with this preamble that we offer the reader the first issue of WHL Newsletter.

References
1. Control of Hypertension in Developing Countries, with Special Reference to Africa. – La lutte contre l'hypertension dans les Pays en voie de développement, en particulier en Afrique. A. Amery & T. Strasser, eds. Tropical Cardiology – Cardiologie Tropicale, vol. 17, suppl. (1987) Bilingual; 206 pages; obtainable from WHL; price: SF 27.–


Scientific News
Endothelin, a newly discovered endothelium-derived vasoconstrictor substance

Endothelium dependent vasodilatation was first described less than ten years ago. Subsequently, an endothelium-derived relaxing factor (EDRF) was found and characterized as nitric oxide or a related substance. Release of this factor from endothelial cells is now thought to bring about at least part of the vasorelaxing actions of circulating vasoactive substances such as bradykinin or acetylcholine. However, the endothelium has not only been recognized as a mediator of vasodilation but also as an inducer of vasoconstriction, although the mechanism of this endothelium-derived vasoconstriction was unknown until very recently.

A Japanese group of investigators has now revealed a possible mechanism of the endothelium-dependent vasoconstriction. They isolated and characterized a 21-amino acid peptide and its gene from porcine aortic endothelial cells which they termed “endothelin”. Endothelin is one of the most potent endogenous vasoconstrictors known. It does not belong to any previously known peptide family, but shows structural homologies to a group of neurotoxins acting on sodium channels, which belong to the same superfamily of voltage-dependent membrane ion channels as a particular subgroup of calcium channels. Indeed, pharmacological studies suggest that endothelin may act by modulating the transmembraneous calcium influx into the vascular smooth muscle cells.

The discovery of endothelin is a landmark in hypertension research. It introduces a novel factor participating in the crosstalk between endothelium and vascular smooth muscle.
Much remains to be learned on the physiological role of this peptide and its possible contribution to cardiovascular diseases such as hypertension.

References

Names and Notes
The Editor of the WHL-Newsletter Rolf Badenhoop, M.D., studied medicine in Freiburg, Vienna, Glasgow and Zurich. He graduated from Freiburg University and gained experience in international projects on preventive medicine.

New members of the WHL-Board: Prof. Michel Safar, Hôpital Broussais, Paris, who joined the WHL-Board 1988 as delegate of the International Society of Hypertension. His special field is haemodynamics and hypertension. Prof. José L. Rodicio, Head of Nephrology Department, Hospital 10 Octubre, Madrid; he is past president of the Spanish Hypertension Society and member of WHL-Council since 1984. His special field is nephrology and hypertension.

WHL - Materials

This is the fourth report released by the National High Blood Pressure Education Program (NHBPEP) of the U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services since 1972. It summarizes the latest scientific research related to hypertension control and the present state of hypertension management. Its purpose is to guide physicians in the care of hypertensive patients and to guide health professionals participating in community high blood pressure programs. A comprehensive review of nonpharmacologic and pharmacologic treatment is given including a discussion of cautious step-down therapy and drug withdrawal. Stepped-care therapy has become more flexible and now offers more options for the physician. A reduction in alcohol consumption and cessation of smoking is recommended for all patients. Dietary recom-

Calendar
November 24 – November 26, 1988, Berlin
Joint scientific meeting of the German and Swiss Hypertension Leagues
Information: Deutsche Liga zur Bekämpfung des hohen Blutdruckes, Frau L. Thomann Postfach 102040, D-6900 Heidelberg 1

December 1 – December 2, 1988, Tel Aviv
International Patient Education Workshop

December 3, 1988, Tel Aviv
Meeting of the Council of WHL

December 4, 1988, Tel Aviv
Meeting on the WHO/WHL Hypertension Management Audit Project

December 4 – December 8, 1988, Tel Aviv
Third International Symposium on Hypertension in the Community
Information: The Secretariat P.O.B. 50006, Tel Aviv 61500, Israel

December 5 – December 9, 1988, Melbourne
Fifth WHO/ISH Meeting on Mild Hypertension

December 6 – May 9, 1989, Orlando
U. S. National High Blood Pressure Control Conference
Recommendations, sodium and caloric restriction have become well accepted facets of blood-pressure control. The report briefly describes conflicting data regarding the usefulness of calcium supplementation and fish oil capsules. There are suggestions about how to improve long-term adherence to anti-hypertensive therapy including education of patients and their families and simplification of treatment regimens. The report also refers to special populations such as black patients, other ethnic groups, young and elderly patients, pregnant women, and patients with coexisting medical conditions.

This valuable consensus report was published in Archives of Internal Medicine 148 (5): 1023–1038, May 1988, and can be obtained from the National High Blood Pressure Education Program, National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute, National Institutes of Health, Building 31, Room 4A05, Bethesda, Maryland 20892, USA.

Library

Mild Hypertension: From Drug Trials to Practice. Guidelines for the treatment of Mild Hypertension

The management of small elevations of blood pressure ("Mild Hypertension") still raises a number of questions: At which levels of blood pressure is drug treatment warranted? Do side effects outweigh the benefits of pharmacotherapy? How does reduction of other cardiovascular risk factors, such as smoking or high lipid intake improve the effect of hypertensive treatment? Can mild hypertension be treated effectively without pharmacological agents? Which are the sociocultural correlates of mild hypertension? How does this condition relate to age? Where are the lower limits of treatment of hypertension? These and similar issues pose daily stumbling blocks for the medical practitioner and are discussed in this volume. Nearly twenty years have passed since the first therapeutic trials were started in the domain of hypertension. The extensive trials testing various strategies for controlling mild hypertension have now produced an enormous data base to allow the formulation of guidelines for treating mild hypertension. Bridging the gap between analysis of trial results and revision of current practices, this volume with over 30 chapters dealing with the above mentioned topics and questions consolidates the results of these trials and offers concrete recommendations for treating mild hypertension. The guidelines in the end of this valuable book have been agreed upon by the Mild Hypertension Liaison Committee, by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the International Society of Hypertension in collaboration with the World Hypertension League (WHL). They represent an official document of the World Health Organization and are written in a way that they are of value for the general practitioner. The national WHL-Member organizations are encouraged to translate the guidelines and make use of them for their national recommendations.


Impressum

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