Editorial

Report from the 1st Cuban Congress on Arterial Hypertension and 4th Caribbean Meeting on Arterial Hypertension, June 14-16, 2000

My first (and I hope not last) visit to Cuba was to attend the first meeting of the Cuba Hypertension Association, which was combined with the 4th Meeting of the Caribbean Arterial Hypertension Society, came at the invitation of the President, Professor M. Delfin Perez Cabaliero. The meeting lasted 4 days and was well attended. There was a notable absence of commercial or sponsored activity. The meeting was dedicated to one of the pioneers of Cuban hypertension control, the late Professor Ignacio Macias Castro. During my stay I was able to take a few days holiday and see something of this beautiful country. I was able to see the operation of its impressive health service and public health system. After the revolution in 1958, about two-thirds of the country’s doctors left. Those who remained trained many more doctors, and now there is a team including a physician and nurse for every 175 inhabitants—a remarkable achievement. I had the chance to visit a small epidemiology and public health centre in the rural township of Jaguey Grande. Most of the common conditions such as measles, polio and TB are controlled by impressive vaccination programmes, so attention is now focused on prevention programmes and hypertension control. I saw a practical demonstration of this in Jaguey Grande in the form of a town sponsored programme to grow a greater variety of vegetables. This was developed after a discussion with the Mayor and the townspeople.

continued on page 2

WHL News

WHL Executive Board Meeting on August 20, 2000, in Chicago, IL, USA

A vote of appreciation and farewell to Dr. Peter Sleight who steps down as President of the WHL. Dr. Sleight relinquishes the presidency of WHL after five years of major contributions at the helm. His wise counsel will continue to be available in his role as Past President.

Welcome to Dr. Claude Lenfant, the new President of the WHL. Dr. Lenfant is well known as the Director of the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI) of the USA. His efforts have had a profound influence on the control of hypertension in the US and around the world. He brings to the Presidency of the WHL a wealth of knowledge and experience in the field of hypertension. Having served the Board with his valuable experience and expertise during the last 5 years, Dr. Patrick J. Mulrow accepted to serve as Secretary General for another term.

Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Editorial</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Report from the 1st Cuban Congress on Arterial Hypertension in Habana</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WHL News</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New WHL President</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reports from Member Leagues</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French Committee Against Hypertension</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argentine Society of Hypertension</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Hypertension Association</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calendar</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Editorial continued

The programme had been primed by a grant from a Spanish agency and was now a reality. We saw a steady stream of shoppers arriving on bicycles or foot, buying fresh vegetables at cheap prices. It had been so successful that two further plots were needed in other parts of Jaguey Grande. A large prospective study (240,000 persons), conducted by Professor Duenas from Habana has one of its study centres in Jaguey Grande. The study investigates the relation between hypertension and future vascular risk.

I am very impressed by the way they have developed a health service with an admirable record in infant mortality and other health statistics. Education and Public Health links do exist with the US, as evidenced by the attendance of several US speakers at the Congress.

I was also able to visit the newly established and very successful Habana site for Dr. Carl Pepine’s INVEST trial, which is testing a verapamil-based regimen versus a conventional beta blocker arm for the treatment of hypertension in the elderly. Dr. David Garcia Barretos, Chief of Cardiology in the Habana Medical Institute, and his enthusiastic team have recruited over 300 patients in just 6 weeks - a phenomenal achievement. Because of its forced isolation (now happily in the process of reconsideration), Cuba and its physicians are keen to join in international trials. In my opinion they will play an important future role because they have a very efficient and equitably spread health system, enthusiastic health professions, and inexpensive costs for such research in Cuba. The physicians I met were happy, but not rich.

Cuba is a rewarding place to visit, with its combination of good value for money, tropical location, old Spanish colonial heritage and the attractive time-warp caused by its partial isolation (although there are good links with Canada, Mexico and South America). It is a very safe and welcoming country with many natural and historical attractions. I urge WHL members to develop research and educational connections with colleagues there; they will find it a rewarding exercise.

People

The Peruvian Society of Hypertension elected a new board. Their president is Dr. Raúl Gamboa. Dr. Fausto López is Vice President, and Dr. Armando Vidalón is Secretary General. The address of the Society is: Jose del Llano Zapata 331, Oficina 704, Miraflores, Lima, Peru.

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continued on page 4
Reports from Member Leagues continued

The Argentine Society of Hypertension (Sociedad Argentina Hipertension Arterial) was founded on March 11th, 1992. Its primary objectives are to enroll all health care professionals who work in this field and to promote the detection, control, prevention and investigation of high blood pressure. The Argentine Republic has a valuable tradition in this field which began five decades ago with the followers of Dr. Bernardo Houssay, Dres. Eduardo Braun Menendez, Juan Carlos Fasciolo and Alberto Taquini, among others.

Our Society consists of different sources such as the Argentine Council of High Blood Pressure of the Argentine Society of Cardiology, the Committee of High Blood Pressure of the Argentine Federation of Cardiology and other scientific councils and local societies. Its spirit is not to compete with them, but its formation was necessary to answer a need of our country and also international demands. It is a member Society that has been growing continuously and whose members are basic and clinical investigators, all of whom are interested in the pathology of hypertension.

Our epidemiological situation concerning hypertension is not known, but we can obtain information from some local studies made at the cities of Cordoba, La Plata and Rosario, and others. We have to point out the high prevalence of this pathology in people over the age of 65.

The central event of our Society is an annual congress. The VII. Congress took place at Bariloche from May 3rd to 6th this year, and the VIII. Congress will be held at Buenos Aires, from March 22nd to 25th, 2001 (see calendar). Another important activity is the National Course of Hypertension which has already been conducted in Avellaneda, San Luis and Tucuman, and which will also begin in Resistencia (Chaco) and Rosario (Santa Fe).

Due to the size of our country, regional districts have been formed in Resistencia, Bariloche, Tucuman and Mar del Plata. In addition to being a member of the WHL, the Argentine Society of Hypertension has permanent relations with the International Society of Hypertension, the European Society of Hypertension, the Inter-American Society of Hypertension and the World Health Organization.

The National Board which rotates every two years is actually located in Rosario, Santa Fe.

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Report from a Symposium at the New York Academy of Medicine, New York City, USA

On May 15 and 16, 2000, the National Hypertension Association (NHA) presented a major symposium, "Hypertension and Hypercholesterolemia, 2000 - Stroke Prevention and Management: New and Emerging Approaches for the Millennium". Day one focused on hypertension and hypercholesterolemia and day two on the problems of stroke. Over 450 professionals attended. The seminar attracted physicians from many varied disciplines including a core of physicians from small practices. We also involved medical students, interns, residents and nurses. NHA was very proud to sponsor this outstanding educational event since these meetings have an influence on the way physicians practice medicine. The symposium ended with a one-hour seminar for the public "Come Hear the Experts" which focused on issues of hypertension, hypercholesterolemia, and stroke for lay persons. It included a question and answer period and was followed by a reception for everyone who attended.

A further activity of the NHA is the preparation of a booklet entitled "100 Questions and Answers about Hypertension" which will be published at the end of this year by Blackwell Sciences Publishers.

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Dr. Robert Lins for the Flemish part of Belgium at AZ-Stuivenberg, Nefrologie-Hypertensie, Lange Beeldekenstraat 267, 2060 Antwerpen, Belgium.
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