Editorial

25 Years of Experience in Successful Community Prevention

The North Karelia Project: Hypertension Care – Essential Part of the CVD Programme

The North Karelia Project began as a national pilot and demonstration programme for CVD prevention in Finland in 1972. A comprehensive community-based intervention involving health services, non-governmental organizations, industry, media and public policy was developed.

The evaluation has shown that population risk factor levels have greatly decreased, consequently, the coronary heart disease mortality rate between 1970–1995 was reduced by 73% in North Karelia and 65% in all of Finland. The experience gained during the initial project period (1972–1977) has been actively used for the health programmes in Finland (1).

The hypertension programme is an essential part of the Project aimed at a reduction of high blood pressure in the population. The specific objective was to improve control of hypertension by reorganizing the primary health care to detect, diagnose, treat and follow-up the patients.

The results showed that hypertension awareness among the general population increased, both systolic and diastolic blood pressure decreased, and the treatment was more effective in North Karelia than in the reference area from 1972 to 1977. According to a separate analysis, the programme proved to be cost-effective. The national implementation of the activities in hypertension control started in late the 1970’s after a careful evaluation of the effects and experiences of the Project. Parallel to national implementations some further activities were tested in North Karelia, which maintained its role as a national demonstration area until the late 1990’s. For instance, the North Karelia Salt Project produced information for the national authorities about the exceptionally high level of salt intake in the area.

The national activities include the work of the national hypertension committee (1978), development of guidelines for hypertension care and for prevention of hypertension. The labels on food products include the sodium content as well as classification into three categories: strong, normal and reduced salt content (2).

The blood pressure level of the population has had continuous downward trends according to population surveys conducted every fifth year since 1972 and the rule of halves has changed to the rule of two thirds. The serum cholesterol level has decreased among hypertensives, even though it is still higher than in normotensives, and the patients with antihypertensive drug treatment smoke less than the rest of the population. However, the situation is far from optimal, the blood pressure levels are still high among the patients. The most alarming finding is that obesity has increased among both hyper-

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Dear colleagues,

In the tradition of both societies, this Meeting represents one of the most important channels for promoting interactions between basic and clinical cardiovascular researches from different countries of the "Americas". Special attention is paid to supporting and encouraging the participation of young investigators. This year, WHL will participate in a symposium.

We are planning to make a special declaratory statement, referring to the current pandemic situation in some emergent countries. It will emphasize the importance of new and different paradigms in confronting this public health problem with a country-oriented approach. Some new data from the national health survey of Mexico will be presented. The prevention of hypertension in different age groups in developing countries will be shown, as well as the relation with other cardiovascular risks. Non-communicable diseases are an important topic to be analyzed.

Our invitation is not only for the American people, we want to share our experiences with physicians worldwide. We hope you can join us. Cancun is a paradise that you will never forget.

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Further details and more information on this project can be found at the websites:

http://www.ktl.fi/portal/english/

http://www.who.int/hpr/successful.prevention.3.shtml

http://www.ktl.fi/portal/english/osiot/research_people_programs/epidemiology_and_health_promotion/projects/cindi/north_karelia.project/

Comments on Editorial of Newsletter 94/2004

Is there a reason to mourn the departure of the mercury sphygmomanometer?

These comments refer to a letter of Dr M-Elbagir K Ahmed on the editorial by Dr J George Fodor.

I completely agree with Dr. Ahmed on his objection regarding the withdrawal of the mercury sphygmomanometer. None of us have come across any remote report implicating adverse mercury effects among health care workers who are handling such instruments. A similar problem arose in the case of vaccines containing traces of mercury based preservatives but are now coolly ignored. Mercury sphygmomanometers have been our companions for innumerable years and have helped medical professionals in their clinical practice. Electronic BP instruments have their own problems in addition from the cost. What is important is to have accurate blood pressure measurement and the subsequent management rather than suddenly changing over to something with which we have little experience. The current WHL President, Claude Lenfant, has already told us to “Apply what we know”.

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People

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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

WHL Regional Meeting with the 6th International Symposium on Hypertension and Related Diseases
October 15–17, 2004
Beijing, China
Information: Dr. Liu Lisheng
Fax: (+86) 10 6835 1990
E-mail: chlhyp@163bj.com

3rd International Congress on Cardiovascular Disease
November 26–28, 2004
Taipei, Taiwan, ROC
Information: Dr. C. E. Chiang,
E-mail: cechiang@vghtpe.gov.tw

10th World Congress on Clinical Nutrition
November 30 – December 3, 2004
Phuket, Thailand
Information: Dr. Buncha Ooraikul
E-mail: buncha@psu.ac.th

8th Annual Symposium Hypertension: The uncontrolled Epidemic
December 4–5, 2004
Karachi, Pakistan
Information: Prof. Mohammad Ishaq
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WHL Regional Meeting with the 9th Annual Meeting of the Egyptian Hypertension Society
April 6–9, 2005
Cairo, Egypt
Information: Congress Secretariat
Mrs. Rehab Mohammad, 1 El-Diwan St. Garden City, Cairo 11519, Egypt
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XIIIth Annual Scientific Meeting of the SHAM and the
XVIth Scientific Meeting of the IASH
April 21–23, 2005
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