Profile
The Argentine Society of Hypertension was founded in March 1992. Its primary objective is to get together all Argentinian scientists from different areas – basic and clinical research, biochemistry, pharmacology, etc. – who are interested in hypertension. One of the first decisions taken was to incorporate in the Board of the Society delegates from different parts of our country. They were chosen from among outstanding clinicians and researchers in the field of hypertension.

The objective of the Society is to disseminate the achievements of scientific research and recent advances in the field of hypertension and to encourage basic as well as clinical research in the area of hypertension in Argentina. In the field of education all over the country, the Society will organize clinically oriented meetings for general practitioners. The objective of these meetings is to review recent advances in the study, diagnosis and treatment of hypertension.

A further task is to organize campaigns to alert the public to the risk of hypertension and to promote programs on health education with regard to hypertension. In this field we wish to cooperate with the national authorities in national epidemiological programs.

The Society will organize an annual scientific meeting, where free communication, symposia and conferences will take place. The most important topics relating to hypertension are to be included in the program and will be presented by internationally recognized specialists from different countries and Argentinian researchers. During the meeting awards are to be presented to young investigators who have accomplished original studies.

WHL News
New Approaches to Preventive Medicine in the UK
In the United Kingdom, new regulations have come into effect to promote involvement of general practitioners in preventive medicine: for the first time, family doctors are being paid on a sessional basis to teach health promotion to their patients. General practices are paid a fee for organizing sessions for well patients as a formal class to teach them lifestyle changes such as weight reduction, physical activity, healthy diet, etc.

Profile continued
Argentina has an important tradition in the field of hypertension and we hope that this Society will encourage our investigators to continue it.

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Scientific News

The Hypertension Management Audit Project

Arterial hypertension, with a prevalence of up to 30% in certain populations, is a major public health problem in Europe. In 1983, the WHO Regional Office for Europe launched the European Health Care Related Hypertension Research Action Programme (HYRAP); this included a project to assess the level and quality of the management of hypertension in selected European populations, best known as the Hypertension Management Audit Project. The World Hypertension League joined the project a few years after its initiation, offering technical, organizational, and financial input.

Recently, an extensive report on first results of the Hypertension Management Audit Project was published. The WHL Newsletter presents a brief summary.

Objectives and Methods of the Project

The immediate objective of the project was to assess by simple methods the levels of control of hypertension achieved in different populations. Five approaches were chosen as a means of assessing hypertension control in the community:

1. The population approach comprises a "classical" epidemiological survey of a probability sample of a population. It aims to assess the basic indicators of awareness of hypertension in the community.

2. In the patient approach, a sample of patients with an established diagnosis of hypertension is selected, and their case histories are reviewed. This survey includes a medical audit, a retrospective assessment of the quality of care on the basis of medical records, combined with re-examination of the patient. The WHO/ISH guidelines for the management of mild hypertension were used as standard of adequate treatment.

3. In the consumer approach, patients are considered as consumers of medical care. The inquiry is an attempt to assess the client’s mood, readiness to follow advice, and possible complaints about the care received.

4. The physician approach consists of a physician survey to assess the knowledge and attitudes of physicians involved in the control of hypertension.

5. The drug utilization approach uses established drug utilization study methods to assess both the amount and structure of drug utilization.

The participating centers were invited to take all five approaches or, if they felt this was beyond their capacity, to select those approaches that seemed to be feasible in the local circumstances.

Centers from 11 countries were involved: Germany, Hungary, Israel, Italy, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, Switzerland, Yugoslavia (Vojvodina), as well as India and China. Eight community surveys were carried out on a total of 150,000 individuals. The random samples examined included over 39,000 men and women. Participation rates ranged from 69% (random samples) to 100% (industrial populations).

Results

The prevalence of confirmed hypertension varies widely; it is considerably lower in the industrial populations (5–15%). In the general population samples, prevalence rates from about 20% up to 27% were found. The proportion of newly discovered hypertension varies from 17% to 34%, thus showing an improvement in detection of hypertension as
Community and patient surveys: treatment status of confirmed hypertensives

compared with reports from the beginning of the 1970s. The proportion of previously known but untreated hypertensives varies from 22% to 38%, with the exception of the special industrial workers in Romania, where all hypertensives are reported to be under treatment. On average, however, only 29% of all confirmed hypertensives have attained normal blood pressure levels. Thus, an average of 46% of confirmed hypertensives are being treated inadequately.

Diuretics are the leading drug family, followed by beta-blockers. Calcium antagonists are given in 3–15% of patients and the use of ACE inhibitors varies considerably between countries.

The results of the consumer inquiry show considerable differences between centers. These differences are not necessarily related to health care per se, and could be due to cultural differences between various countries and societies. Eight physician inquiries were carried out on a sample of 4830 physicians taken from a total of 8281. The overall response rate was slightly over 50%.

The use of aneroid sphygmomanometers is still widespread. A surprising number of physicians report using Korotkoff IV sound, while 3–26% admit to rounding up to 10 mmHg. While in all centers most physicians declare starting treatment at 160 mmHg systolic pressure, diastolic cut-off values are given as 95–100 mmHg.

Most physicians in most centers ascribe a high importance to non-drug treatment and risk factor control, but cross-checking with information obtained from the patient survey makes their actions less impressive.

In general, more physicians report the need for certain diagnostic methods than are in fact carried out as shown by patient records.

Information on advances in the management of hypertension seems to reach physicians mostly through medical journals, while other information sources vary greatly.

The process evaluation used a number of relevant indicators of the quality of antihypertensive management, such as the proportion of awareness of hypertension in the population, the percentage of missed appointments, the distribution of therapeutic attitudes among physicians, and the structure of drug prescribing.

This project is one of the first to report on patients' satisfaction with the therapy used to manage hypertension. The varied results indicate that more attention should be paid to this component of hypertension management; physicians need more formal training in this domain. This project has also shown, however, that new methods are needed to influence physicians' acceptance of and compliance with recommendations for the work-up and management of hypertensive patients.

Regardless of some weaknesses as e. g. the varying validity of data in different countries (which are discussed in more detail in the monograph), the Hypertension Management Audit Project may serve as a standard for future evaluations of hypertension control in populations. As a matter of fact, continuation and expansion of the project is being planned for 1994.

Reference:
WHL News continued

Second, to produce doctors with knowledge of and skills in disease prevention and risk reduction strategies, the National Forum for Coronary Heart Disease Prevention has produced a code for good practice for medical schools. The idea is to make sure that medical students are exposed to preventive teaching. One of the long term aims of this work is the appointment of a senior member of staff in all medical schools to coordinate the at present somewhat fragmented teaching of disease prevention. The authors want to give students a wider perspective of the practice of medicine and the role and responsibilities of the doctor in society, including health policy; they also want to enable students to communicate effectively about disease prevention with patients. Another goal is to provide an educational setting that fosters a positive attitude towards prevention of disease. This comprehensive approach to disease prevention provides both knowledge and skills, as well as incentives to apply them in the family doctor’s practice, where preventive work can be done most effectively.

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Impressum

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Calendar

WHL Council Conference and Symposium on “Communication in Hypertension”, in conjunction with a National Meeting of the Italian League against Hypertension
December 2–4, 1993
Padua, Italy
Information:
WHL Secretariat

1st Pan Arab Conference on Hypertension
December 6–8, 1993
Cairo, Egypt
Information:
Dr. M. Moshen Ibrahim
National Hypertension Project
Kasr El Aini
P.O. Box 139 El Roda, Cairo, Egypt

Congress on Epidemiology and Prevention of Cardiovascular Diseases
February 24–26, 1994
Nice, France
Information:
French Heart Foundation
50 rue du Rocher, 75008 Paris, France

34th Annual Conference on Cardiovascular Disease Epidemiology
March 16–19, 1994
Tampa, Florida, USA
Information:
AHA, Scientific & Corporate Meetings, 7272 Greenville Avenue Dallas, TX 75231, USA

International Society for the Study of Hypertension in Pregnancy Meeting
March 16–19, 1994
Sydney, Australia
Information:
ISSHP
145 Macquarie Street
Sydney, NSW 2000, Australia

15th Scientific Meeting of the International Society of Hypertension
March 21–24, 1994
Melbourne, Australia
Information:
Congress Secretariat, P.O. Box 29
Parkville, 3052 Victoria, Australia