1. The World Hypertension League: Why and How?

Why the World Hypertension League?

Hypertension is common in most populations of the world, and its control should be improved. Research has made successful treatment of hypertension a reality and, hopefully, its prevention will also become increasingly successful in the future; but scientific advances in this field must be widely applied in order to realize all the benefits they offer, a process that should be encouraged and vigorously promoted.

Numerous national leagues, societies, committees and foundations for the control of high blood pressure were established during the past few decades. Many are primarily scientific societies, fostering research and organizing meetings, symposia and congresses. The International Society of Hypertension (ISH) is the scientific organization which unites hypertension scientists from all parts of the world, by organizing international congresses and publishing a scientific journal. Leagues and committees whose main aim is to promote the practice of hypertension control through education of the public and of health care professionals frequently still function in isolation - although much benefit and mutual stimulation could be derived from exchange of information and regular contact.

Bringing together and stimulating organizations committed to the control of hypertension is the goal and the raison d'être of the World Hypertension League (WHL).

Objectives and Policies of WHL
(Statement by the Council of the WHL, Chicago, April 29, 1985)

The objectives of the WHL are to promote the prevention, detection, and control of hypertension in populations. The WHL acts through the intermediary of national and regional organizations committed to the cause of hypertension control: national hypertension leagues, hypertension societies, heart or health foundations, hypertension committees, education programmes, and similar bodies.

The thrust of the WHL's action is in liaising with the member organizations, promoting the exchange of information among them, and offering internationally applicable methods and programmes for hypertension control. In these endeavours, the WHL closely co-operates with the World Health Organization (WHO), the International Society of Hypertension (ISH) and the European Society of Hypertension (ESH). The WHL is also ready to co-operate with any other body interested in the control of hypertension.

In countries where there is no national organization for hypertension control, the WHL tries to encourage its establishment and invites it to become a member of the WHL. The WHL places great emphasis on actively promoting the control of hypertension in developing countries, and on assessing the most appropriate methods applicable in situations of socio-economic constraints.
Membership in the WHL is collective, i.e. its members are not individuals, but national leagues or other bodies. In order to promote co-operation within the countries, as a rule, only one league or other body from each country may join the WHL, though other organizations from a member country may join as associate members.

The WHL lends moral support to national activities by acting as a co-sponsor of local community orientated programmes, meetings and other actions. To emphasize this, the WHL Council Conferences are held in a different country each year, in conjunction with an annual meeting or other important activity of the host country’s national league.

The principal approaches to promotion of hypertension control are providing information to physicians and other health care professionals, and educating the general public (health education) as well as hypertensive subjects (patient education). The WHL is particularly committed to developing and improving educational methods of informing patients and physicians about hypertension control.