The WHL family was greatly saddened with the passing of Dr Edward J. Roccella. Dr. Roccella was a beacon for global hypertension control.

The global hypertension world and the World Hypertension League mourns the loss of a true population health leader. Ed Roccella, the longest serving Coordinator of the U.S. National High Blood Pressure Education Program (NHBPEP) of the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI), died at the age of 77 on November 18, 2021, after a short illness. (A full obituary can be found in the Washington Post.)

Ed exerted a key influence on advancing public health strategies for preventing and controlling hypertension, in the U.S and internationally, through his management of the NHBPEP Coordinating Committee, under the general direction of the NHLBI Director. Ed was chiefly responsible for guiding the creation of the Reports of the Joint National Committee (JNC) for the Prevention, Detection, Evaluation, and Treatment of High Blood Pressure, the first and arguably most influential of such guidelines. Under Ed’s coordination, numerous in-depth reports were also produced focused on prevention and adherence and on important population sub-groups including children, older persons, women, persons with diabetes and/or kidney disease. It has been no coincidence that the greatest strides in treatment and control of hypertension occurred during the life of the NHBPEP.

Ed’s astuteness and interpersonal skills were well suited for his approach for prevention and management focused on collaboration and cooperation – the Team –, evident in the dissemination and implementation of research findings from the major hypertension prevention and treatment trials, as well as forums focused on salt/sodium intake, antihypertensive therapy, health disparities, accurate blood pressure measurement and health behavior modification. Health education for all the population was always a top priority for Ed as demonstrated in his leadership with the WHL Children’s Art Program.

Ed will be remembered as the epitome of a knowledgeable, dedicated public servant, who exercised untiring, highly effective, low-profile leadership in one of the most important areas of public health. His strength and resiliency in both his professional and personal life set an example for us all. We express our sincere sympathy to Dr. Roccella’s wife, Eileen.

Dr. Jeffrey Cutler
Dr. Paul Whelton
Dr. Dan Lackland