

Birth of the 'Women in Hypertension Research Programme'

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The need for the Women in Hypertension Research Programme

During my presidency of ISH, 2014-2016, it became very clear to me that despite women contributing significantly to the hypertension community, they were under-represented in many aspects of ISH. For example, before 2014 there had never been a woman president in the 48 years of the existence of ISH and in 2016, while women constituted 24% of the ISH membership, only 13% were represented on the leadership committees. This was even worse in earlier years. To address this I made it a priority of my Presidency mandate to improve the situation. With the strong support, encouragement and backing of the ISH Executive, this became a reality and the Women in Hypertension Research (WiHR) Programme of ISH was born. Working with an outstanding and committed subcommittee (2015-2018) including Sofie Brouwers (Belgium), Louise Burrell (Australia), Fadi Charchar (Australia), Alta Schutte (South Africa) and Ulrike (Muscha) Steckelings (Denmark), we set out to identify some of the challenges and needs of our women ISH members. Listening to the voices from our male and female members from all regions represented in ISH, we developed a clear mission, in perfect alignment with that of ISH, which is committed to encouraging, supporting and inspiring women in science and medicine in the field of hypertension and related cardiovascular diseases.

The mission and goals

Specifically, the mission of the WiHR programme is to promote women scientists and clinicians so that they can fulfil their career aspirations in hypertension and related cardiovascular diseases.

In addition the WiHR programme aims to:

1. Provide a platform for networking and mentoring.
2. Recognise and promote successes of women in the hypertension community.
3. Involve all ISH members in promoting equal opportunities for women in science and medicine based on merit.
4. Encourage research in the field of 'hypertension and cardiovascular disease in women'

To achieve this mission, our initial goals focused on:

1. Securing better representation of women as key figures in ISH leadership, scientific meetings and activities
2. Having special mentoring and scientific sessions led by the WiHR committee at the biennial ISH Scientific Meetings
3. Ensuring active participation in ISH summer schools
4. Creation of 2 new awards, namely
 - ❖ Mid-Career Award for women researchers
 - ❖ Research Award related to 'hypertension and cardiovascular disease in women'.
5. Establishing a special honour (plaque) for senior women who have given outstanding service to the ISH and/or made exceptionally distinguished contributions to hypertension research.
6. Creation of a global mentoring scheme for women, through networks, seminars, training programmes, discussion groups, travel awards etc.
7. Engagement with the annual MMM by highlighting 'hypertension and cardiovascular disease in women'.
8. Creation of a highlighted section on the ISH website.

Launch of the Women in Hypertension Research Programme

In 2016, the WiHR programme was born at the biennial scientific ISH meeting in Seoul. At a special dedicated session, the programme was launched with special guest speaker Prof Barbara Casadei, BHF Chair of cardiovascular medicine, Oxford University, who gave an inspirational presentation about her journey as a cardiovascular researcher and clinician. At the launch meeting we also honoured our senior members who had provided outstanding service to ISH and/or made exceptionally distinguished contributions to hypertension research.

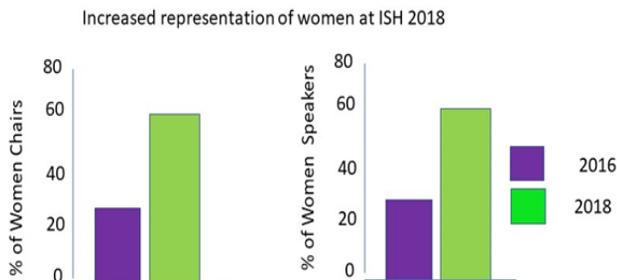
These included Prof Ann Soenarta (Indonesia), Prof Talma Rosenthal (Israel), Prof Suzanne Oparil (USA), Prof Bonita Falkner (USA) and Prof Lisheng Liu (China).

Over the course of the next 2 years, many of these ambitions were beginning to be realised. By 2018, at the biennial meeting held in Beijing, ISH had secured a second woman president (Alta Schutte, 2018-2020), the number of women in ISH leadership committees had grown and there was a marked increase (from 20% to 50%) in women representation at the Beijing meeting as shown in the graphs.

Moreover, the WiHR group led 3 special sessions at the 2018 Beijing meeting (Special mentoring session ‘Women in Hypertension Research- maximising opportunities and research career goals’; Breakfast workshop ‘Hypertension and cardiovascular disease in women’ and Clinical Science Session ‘Hypertension in pregnancy/hypertension in women’).

The future of the programme

As I look back over the past few years from when the idea of the WiHR programme was conceived, to its creation and now to see it as a well-established initiative under the umbrella of ISH, it is with tremendous pride and honour that I hand over the leadership to Ulrike (Muscha) Steckelings as the next Chair of the committee. I am truly grateful to Neil Poulter (President 2016-2018) and the ISH Executive, for having being so supportive in the initial idea. It has also been a great privilege working with so many dedicated enthusiastic and hard-working committee members, colleagues and friends, committed to the WiHR mission. There is no doubt in my mind that under the outstanding leadership of Muscha and her committee, the goal to ‘promote women scientists and clinicians so that they can fulfil their career aspirations in hypertension and related cardiovascular diseases’ will be respected and that the programme and network will continue to grow and strengthen.



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NEWS, OLD NEWS, FAKE NEWS

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“Are you lonesome tonight?”

Stephan Rössner

Elvis Presley 1935–1977

Elvis Aaron Presley was a cultural icon, widely known simply as Elvis, the king of rock-and-roll. His early musical style was a fusion of country, rhythm and blues and always with a strong backbeat. Elvis has been regarded as one of the most important figures of the popular culture of last century and has sold about one billion records worldwide. He never had any formal musical training and could not read music but played by ear. From the mid fifties onwards Elvis had a spectacular career with admirers all over the world.

Elvis made numerous films, some of which were flops, while others topped the lists. His military service in Germany was followed by thousands of fans but this was also the period in time when Elvis was first introduced to the drugs that would result in ill health and eventually to his premature death. Having been a slender and well-trained young man with a particular interest in karate, Elvis continuously put on weight and ended his life grossly obese.

Elvis’s dietary habits were studied and analysed and even described in a television documentary. There was even a cookery book describing what Elvis appreciated eating. It was said that Elvis had a favourite super-sandwich which was flown in especially for him from Denver to Graceland, Tennessee. The recipe is not very appetising: a large baguette, half a kilogram of bacon, a big can of peanut butter plus a jar of grape jelly. Bread is toasted in the oven, the soft dough is removed and filled with fried bacon, peanut butter and jelly. It was said that a “sandwich” of this size would feed ten people – but Elvis had it all by himself. Elvis had extremely simple eating habits and his wife Priscilla, whom he met when she was only 14 years old and married seven years later, described Elvis’s dietary habits in her memoirs *Elvis and Me*. To cook for Elvis was simple, “you just took what there was at home and burnt it”.

