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Report on the Joint ISH-ESC
Session during the Congress
of the European Society of
Cardiology, Barcelona,
Spain (26-30 August 2017)



In 2016 at the ESC Meeting in Rome, the European Society of Cardiology and International Society of Hypertension held, for the first time, a joint session on addressing some of the most important challenges facing hypertension. It was important to take this joint initiative further during the second ISH-ESC Joint Session, held in Barcelona. The session titled, *Population-wide blood pressure lowering – Theory and practice* was chaired by the World Heart Federation President-Elect, Professor Karen Sliwa-Hahnle (South Africa) and ISH Council Member, Professor Thomas Unger (Netherlands). The opening lecture by Professor Torben Joergenson from Denmark reviewed the general principles of population-based interventions – in essence the benefits highlighted by Geoffrey Rose, namely that shifting the population distribution of a risk factor, in this case raised blood pressure, will prevent more burden of disease than targeting those people at increased risk. He also highlighted the challenges in implementing such interventions, such as the political will of global bodies and governments, and interference by industry.

The presentation linked well to a presentation by

Professor Alta Schutte (South Africa) who focused on the dramatic shift in burden of hypertension from high income countries to LMICs, as recently published by the NCD Risk Factor Collaboration. Since control of hypertension is very low in LMICs, population-based strategies targeting the whole life-course seems the best approach over the long term – aligned with the report of the Lancet Commission on Hypertension. She discussed examples of success stories, such as the sugar taxes in Mexico, and legislation enforcing mandatory reduction in the sodium content of processed foods in South Africa.

Professor Neil Poulter (United Kingdom) gave a detailed overview of the May Measurement Month 2017 campaign of the ISH and World Hypertension League. This global awareness and screening programme for hypertension was the largest ever performed. The ISH supported over 100 countries in joining this initiative by providing online support, detailed training materials, information in five different languages (please view www.maymeasure.org) and with the support of Omron UK also provided blood pressure devices to resource-poor settings. Even during August the ISH still received thousands of data entries being submitted from participating countries, which will ultimately form part of a tremendous global database. Further participation was also encouraged for the MMM2018 campaign.

The final presentation was delivered by Professor Niels Graudal from Denmark on salt and diet in the context of blood pressure. Based on recent Cochrane as well as systematic reviews and meta-analyses he challenged the notion that salt reduction below 5.8 grams/day will yield population-wide benefits in blood pressure lowering. His findings showed that salt restriction in normotensive populations will have little effect, and salt intake of less than 5.8 grams/day may only benefit hypertensive patients with a high salt intake. Many debates on this topic have been prominent at recent scientific meetings, and this presentation was no different, with several scientists from the audience disagreeing. The session was ended with this lively discussion, even continuing after the conclusion of the session.

-Alta Schutte

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