

THE ISH AT 60



International Society of Hypertension

60
YEARS
1966-2026

Established in 1966, the ISH this year celebrates its 60th anniversary. As we reach this milestone, we asked several Past Presidents of the ISH to give us their reflections on what the ISH's biggest contribution has been over the last 60 years - and what it should focus on next.

Giuseppe Mancia

(Italy) ISH President 1988-1990



Founded in 1966 after two small preparatory meetings (Prague and Siena), the International Society of Hypertension (ISH) soon became the most prestigious scientific Society addressing the progress made by

research on pathophysiological and clinical aspects of hypertension at a worldwide level. Its prestige was due to the scientific fame of the founders (I. Page, G. Pickering, P. Milliez, F. Gross, C. Bartorelli, J. Robertson, A. Zanchetti, to mention a few) as well as to the high scientific level of its meetings which started in 1971 (Milan) and then, at biannual intervals, were held all over the world, always with a large attendance, a high scientific quality and a great interest and communication coverage from the entire medical world. This was also favoured by the fact that these were golden years for hypertension basic, epidemiological and clinical research on hypertension, including seminal trials of fundamental importance for treatment, which were often presented and discussed for the first time at the ISH meetings. For young investigators like myself, critical exposure to the best ongoing

research as well as presentation and discussion of the results of their work in a high scientific quality environment was an unforgettable experience with positive effects for future work.

A second aspect to mention is that ISH early recognized the importance of issuing hypertension guidelines beyond individual country boundaries (e.g. the US guidelines) to help correct management of hypertension worldwide. This was made possible by the close cooperation of ISH with the World Health Organization (WHO), which led to the widely popular WHO/ISH guidelines first in the eighties under the coordination of A. Zanchetti for ISH and T. Strasser for WHO, and then in the nineties and at the start of the current millennium.

Because of my European origin, allow me to mention a third important contribution, i.e. the assistance given by ISH to the foundation of the European Society of Hypertension (ESH) in 1989. ISH sponsored and helped the organization of the preliminary meetings and then inspired the structure of the new Society which was modelled after ISH, with virtually the same byelaws and goals, with the addition of one permanent ISH representative in its Scientific Council. The close relationship of ESH with ISH has since continued and reinforced by some very successful common meetings, the next one being the ISH/ESH meeting to be held in 2028 in Glasgow.

Tony Heagerty

(UK) ISH President 2008-2010



The International Society of Hypertension has a rich history of leading the drive to raising awareness and improving the management of high blood pressure globally. Its commitment to

promoting research into all aspects of the disease is unstinting and absolute. It has been led by a litany of academic hypertension physicians and I was privileged to serve as a President.

Perhaps its greatest achievement in its first 60 years was the advancement of the overwhelming case for detecting and treating high blood pressure and providing the forum for debates over which therapy to use and what constitutes good control. The Hypertension Community is a close family but argues strongly but fairly always!

Beyond these goals for me high points include assisting in the formation of National Societies of Hypertension and in particular in regions such as the Middle East where ISH was instrumental in Lebanon and Bahrain. In addition, the regular educational visits undertaken by Robert Fagard to Sub Saharan African Countries facilitated increased awareness of the epidemic of cardiovascular disease imminently threatening that region. They inspired many of the senior leaders now prominently active across the continent in hypertension management.

From a research perspective John Hall designed the ISH Fellowship Scheme which allowed young academically minded doctors from less opulent countries to visit host labs and learn new techniques to take back to establish research programmes back home. Several have become globally successful.

And unquestionably impressive has been the regular release of evidence-based hypertension guidelines which are pragmatically crafted to be applicable in low- and middle-income countries.

High blood pressure is a global problem which requires simple management – measurement and treatment. ISH has shouldered the mantle of commitment to disease prevention for 60 years.

Where should it go next?

I believe its voice should be heard on a global stage. It should be the champion of cardiovascular disease prevention. It should be the pressure on governments to understand that the cost of hypertension management is minimal compared with the savings that accrue from avoiding coronary revascularisation or treating stroke survivors lost to the workforce prematurely. There is still much to do!

Stephen Harrap

(Australia) ISH President 2010-2012



What has been ISH's greatest contribution over the past 60 years, and what should its next priority be?

The answer to these questions lies in the name ISH: "International".

The ISH provides a preeminent global stage on which countries and regions are represented and highlighted with benefits for both individuals and societies. The specific commitment of the ISH to worldwide interests has been exemplified initially through the International Forum and more recently through the Regional Advisory Groups. Within the broad constituency that comprises the ISH, the interactions and collaborations are invaluable and create a formidable network. They are fostered by the ISH to help establish careers and leadership potential of people and to strengthen and grow blood pressure professional associations around the world.

New ways in which tangible international support can be delivered should be a priority of the ISH in coming years.

Rhian Touyz

(Canada) ISH President 2014-2016



"For 60 years, the ISH has served as a global hub for hypertension, uniting clinicians, health care workers, and researchers around the world in a shared mission to reduce the burden of high blood pressure.

Looking ahead, our challenge is to translate the discoveries, guidelines, and efforts born from the ISH into real-world action – ensuring they achieve genuine, measurable impact in reducing hypertension worldwide."

Neil Poulter

(UK) ISH President 2016-2018



Over the past 60 years, I believe one of ISH's greatest contributions has been its ability to bring together the world's leading expertise in hypertension and translate that knowledge into

rigorous, evidence-based guidance that can improve clinical practice globally.

The ISH guidelines are an excellent example of this. They give healthcare professionals clear, practical guidance on how to manage hypertension once it has been identified. But, of course, that depends on people knowing they have hypertension in the first place.

That was one of the motivations behind launching May Measurement Month (MMM) during my Presidency of ISH in 2017. We knew that millions of people worldwide were living with raised blood pressure without knowing it, and that we needed to complement guidance on managing hypertension with a concerted effort to find those people. Since then, MMM has screened over 8 million adults

across more than 120 countries, and found over 2 million people with untreated or inadequately treated hypertension.

As ISH looks to its next 60 years, I believe closing that detection gap and expanding linkage to management facilities must remain a priority. We have made enormous progress in understanding how to treat hypertension, the challenge that remains is ensuring that knowledge reaches the people who need it most.

Alta Schutte

(Australia) ISH President 2018-2020



As a Past President of the International Society of Hypertension, I regard ISH's greatest contribution over the past 60 years as bringing the global hypertension community together around a shared

scientific, clinical and public-health mission. Through research, education, guidelines and advocacy, ISH has helped establish raised blood pressure as the leading preventable cause of cardiovascular disease and premature death.

Its next priority must be to achieve substantially better blood pressure control worldwide. The global burden remains immense: approximately 1.4–1.7 billion adults are living with hypertension, yet only about one in five have their blood pressure controlled. Moreover, 83% of people with uncontrolled hypertension live in low- and middle-income countries, where progress has been particularly limited. We have compelling evidence that even a 5 mmHg reduction in systolic blood pressure lowers major cardiovascular events by about 10%, consistently across different levels of cardiovascular risk. Effective, affordable and scalable strategies could therefore prevent millions of premature deaths.

The ISH should continue to provide the leadership and advocacy needed to translate evidence into implementation: strengthening prevention,

detection, treatment and long-term control, while addressing inequities in access to care. We have the knowledge and tools. Our responsibility now is to ensure they reach everyone who needs them. Improving blood pressure control must remain the central global goal of hypertension care.

Maciej Tomaszewski

(UK) ISH President 2020-2022



The International Society of Hypertension has always been a hub for excellence - celebrating the very best in hypertension research and standing as a leading voice and opinion-maker

in the field. Through its publications, impact statements, guidelines and position papers, and its partnerships with world-leading organisations, it has advanced hypertension education and fostered stronger collaboration in research and clinical care across the globe.

Above all, the Society has attracted exceptional talent and remarkable commitment to its leadership over the years. The New Investigator Committee and the New Blood campaign have been resounding successes, creating career-making opportunities for people around the world — many of whom now sit in the driving seats of hypertension research globally.

Looking ahead, the Society's priority must be to turn that reach and expertise into measurable impact: narrowing the gaps in awareness, treatment and

control that still divide world regions, and ensuring that the next generation of leaders it develops is ready and equipped to carry that work to the patients and populations who need it most.

Bryan Williams

(UK) ISH President 2022-2024



For me, the key word in the Society's title is "International" as it brings together colleagues and their different perspectives on tackling the world's most important cause of premature death.

This has been reflected

in the ISH Guidelines which have identified common aspects of best practice that should apply to all regions of the world whilst also highlighting region specific differences and challenges for implementation which is unique relative to the many other guidelines which tend to be country or region specific. This global perspective has been aided by ISH Regional Advisory Groups, the ISH congress and "Hypertension News". A key function of any organisation is to look to the future, and the ISH has been vitally important in inspiring and nurturing the next generation of global leaders in research and clinical practice in hypertension.

Looking ahead, the ISH must focus on its distinctive capabilities, continue to raise the profile of the importance of detecting and effectively treating hypertension globally, providing authoritative, rigorous and evidence-based reports and guidance on how to do this, as well as garner the support needed to inspire the next generation of leaders in hypertension.



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