



# CARTAGENA DECLARATION

## **A Call to Action to Improve Adherence to Antihypertensive Medications Across the World**

Hypertension is the major preventable cause of premature morbidity and mortality from cardiovascular diseases, affecting over 1.5 billion people world-wide, causing a substantial economic burden on health systems. The prevalence of hypertension globally has reached a critical level, prompting the World Health Organization (WHO) to declare it a public health crisis. Poor detection of hypertension remains a concern, but even when hypertension is detected and treated, global blood pressure control rates remain lamentably poor, averaging around 35% even in the most developed countries. Whilst it is accepted that it may be challenging to optimally control blood pressure in everybody, evidence from clinical studies has shown that it should be possible to control blood pressure much more effectively with existing treatments than is currently being achieved globally. We now recognise that one of the key barriers to improving blood pressure control is sub-optimal adherence to antihypertensive medications. This is not a new problem. Indeed, twenty years ago, the WHO identified poor adherence to treatment as “a worldwide problem of striking magnitude”. The problem of therapeutic adherence is magnified in patients with hypertension because it is generally an asymptomatic condition – the so called “silent killer”, that requires life-long treatment. Moreover, the treatment often produces no discernible symptomatic benefit for patients, may cause side effects, incurs chronic treatment costs and often requires treatment with multiple medications. That said, the treatment of hypertension is one of the most cost-effective interventions in medicine, with abundant evidence confirming the effectiveness of antihypertensive therapies at reducing the risk of heart diseases, stroke, kidney disease and vascular dementia. So, twenty years on from the WHO noting that poor medication adherence was a world-wide problem of striking magnitude, we want to use the occasion of the International Society of Hypertension Congress in Cartagena to frame the Cartagena Declaration as a call to action, to take up the challenge to improve therapeutic adherence for the treatment of hypertension across the world.

### ***Integrating Scientific Knowledge with a Call for Action***

As a Scientific Society, the International Society of Hypertension will work with other like-minded Medical, Scientific and Patient Societies or Associations, to develop and coordinate action plans at policy, economic, scientific, behavioural, industrial, and all stakeholder levels. Recognising that the challenge of improving adherence to life-saving medicines is a multi-agency, multifaceted challenge, with the patient at the centre. As such, our work and the solutions must be relevant to our patients’ daily lives, considering their individuality, regional, economic, cultural and social contexts, to achieve our goals.

## ***Strengthening Commitment and Awareness***

With this Cartagena declaration, we aim to highlight the importance and relevance of adherence to medicines for the treatment of hypertension in particular, and for cardiovascular disease prevention in general, amongst the wider population, patients, and all stakeholders in the health sector.

To this end, we recognise that other stakeholders in cardiovascular disease prevention share our common purpose to improve adherence to treatments that will improve the outcomes of patients with a wide range of cardiometabolic, renal and stroke risk factors or comorbidities.

A first meeting of stakeholders representing health care professionals, health and scientific societies, patients and industry, from across the world, met in London on September 2nd 2024 and agreed to work together to establish a World Adherence Day to highlight the importance of adherence to treatments that prevent disease. The date of this dedicated world day focussed on treatment adherence will be on March 27th 2025. The final name of the “Day” has yet to be agreed but it will reflect the main focus of this dedicated day, which is therapeutic adherence, consistent with the aims of this Cartagena Declaration.

It is anticipated that individual Medical, Scientific and Patient societies and associations will use that day to promote work in their own field, with a joint aim of highlighting the importance of treatment adherence to reduce the burden of cardiovascular and related diseases on a global scale.

### ***Declaring March 27th 2025 as the first World Day focused on increasing awareness of the importance of Treatment Adherence to ensure optimal treatment of Arterial Hypertension and Cardiovascular Disease Prevention***

On the occasion of the International Society Congress in Cartagena, Colombia, on this day September 22nd 2024, in this place, let us commit to work together and with others, to give greater priority to highlighting the scale and importance of sub-optimal treatment adherence, to better understand the drivers of suboptimal adherence and to develop better ways to improve treatment adherence and thus, the effectiveness of treatment of hypertension, for our patients, across the world.

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