

Hypertension: Are We Ignoring A Very Important Public Health Problem?

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Consistently, reports from multinational organizations such as the WHO, as well as regional and national studies, indicate that hypertension ($\geq 140/90$ mm Hg) is the most prevalent risk factor for cardiovascular disease and that hypertension also intervenes in other conditions including kidney disease and diabetes. The same reports establish that cardiovascular diseases are the first cause of death worldwide, and there is clear evidence that economic development seen in many countries is accompanied by increases in hypertension prevalence and cardiovascular disease deaths.

In 2005 the world population was 6,455 million and studies have reported that 972 million had hypertension. The United Nations Population Division estimates the world population of 2025 will be 7,811 million, an increase of 22% over 2005. It has been reported that in 2025 there will be 1,559 million hypertensives, a 60% increase over 2005.

Fortunately, we have the knowledge, and tools, to combat hypertension – to prevent it and to treat and control it if it develops. Unfortunately, current data show that the rate of control varies from country to country ranging only from 35% to less than 10%.

In view of current data, and projections for the next decades, the world medical community must respond by aggressively making use of what we know to treat and control hypertension. Approaches include assuring awareness and detection of hypertension by requiring the active participation of the medical community working with patients. Physicians and patients must follow life styles which can prevent development of hypertension and, if it develops, limit it from becoming worse. The objective of therapeutic interventions must be to “treat to goal.” This cannot be achieved without the continuous participation of health care professionals.

No one is exempt from the risk of developing hypertension, and no country is exempt from its consequences. Hypertension is a major public health problem that cannot be ignored!

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