World Hypertension League and World Stroke Organization forge strategic partnership to reverse six million deaths attributed to stroke each year

GENEVA, BURNABY | 17 May 2013 – Today is World Hypertension Day. The World Hypertension League (WHL) and the World Stroke Organization (WSO) have joined together to form a formidable strategic alliance in the global fight against stroke.

Each year, some 9.4 million people die as a result of high blood pressure or hypertension. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), one in three adults worldwide has high blood pressure. Of these, nearly six million lives are lost to stroke every year. Hypertension is the biggest single risk factor for stroke. It is responsible for nearly 50 per cent of ischemic strokes. It also heightens the risk of hemorrhagic stroke.

World Hypertension Day was established to highlight and raise awareness of the fact that stroke, heart and kidney diseases caused by high blood pressure, can largely be prevented. The theme chosen this year is “Healthy Blood Pressure, Healthy Heart Beat”.

High blood pressure is the most common cause or risk factor that may lead to atrial fibrillation (AF) or abnormal heart beat. The combination of AF and hypertension increases the risk of stroke. AF increases with age. By the age of 75 years, about 1 in 10 will have AF. Public awareness to avoid high blood pressure and AF is the theme of this year’s campaign.

Some 15 million people suffer a stroke each year. According to the WHO, stroke is the second leading cause of death for people above the age of 60, and the fifth leading cause in people aged 15 to 59. Stroke also attacks children, including newborns. Each year, nearly six million people die from stroke. In fact, stroke is responsible for more deaths annually than those attributed to AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria put together. Stroke is also the leading cause of long-term disability irrespective of age, gender, ethnicity or country. One in six people will have a stroke in their lifetime.

“Stroke and other vascular diseases are largely preventable but are causing an epidemic of chronic disease that threatens wellness, health systems and economies globally. Developing strategic working partnerships of important international and national organizations are critical to help mobilize societies to take the actions well known to be highly effective but that are sadly rarely implemented. I look forward with enthusiasm to work with the World Stroke Organization’ said Dr Norm Campbell, President-Elect World Hypertension League.

WSO President Dr Stephen Davis notes “I am very pleased that our two organizations have formed this strategic alliance. Our goals and objectives in fighting hypertension and stroke are so very clearly linked. Stroke and hypertension are today’s silent killers. By working together, we can achieve so much more.”

The WHL and the WSO are calling on their member organizations and partners worldwide to join the “1 in 6” World Stroke Campaign which is asking them to:
1. Know their personal risk factors: high blood pressure, diabetes, and high blood cholesterol.
2. Be physically active and exercise regularly. Attain and maintain a healthy body weight.
3. Maintain a healthy diet high in fruit and vegetable and low in salt, sugar, saturated and transfats to stay a healthy state and keep blood pressure low.
4. Limit alcohol consumption.
5. Avoid cigarette smoke. And, if they smoke, to seek help to stop now.
6. Learn to recognize the warning signs of a stroke.

The WSO launched the campaign in 2010 to call attention to the fact that “1 in 6” people worldwide will have a stroke in their lifetime. More information about the campaign can be obtained by visiting www.worldstrokecampaign.org

World Hypertension Day has been established to highlight the preventable stroke, heart and kidney diseases caused by high blood pressure and to communicate information on prevention, detection and treatment to the public. Each year, 17 May is designated World Hypertension Day and it is an initiative of the World Hypertension League. More information about World Hypertension Day can be obtained by visiting www.worldhypertensionleague.org

About the World Hypertension League
The World Hypertension League is a federation of leagues, societies, and other national bodies devoted to this goal. Individual membership is not possible. The thrust of the WHL's action is in liaison with the member organizations, promoting the exchange of information among them, and offering internationally applicable methods and programs for hypertension control. Bringing together and stimulating organizations committed to the control of hypertension is the goal and raison d'etre of the WHL.

The objectives of the World Hypertension League are to promote the detection, control and prevention of arterial hypertension in populations.

About the World Stroke Organization
The World Stroke Organization (WSO) was established in October 2006. WSO’s mission is to reduce the global burden of stroke through prevention, treatment and long-term care. As the lead international body for stroke, WSO aims to accomplish its mission by:

- Fostering the best standards of practice
- Increasing stroke awareness among the population and among health professionals
- Preventing subtle cerebrovascular disease leading to gait disorders, imbalance, vascular cognitive impairment and behavioral changes
- Influencing policies for stroke prevention and improved health services
- Providing education in collaboration with public and private organizations
- Facilitating stroke research advocacy for people with stroke
- Fostering the development of systems and organizations for long-term care and support of stroke survivors and their families.

With individual and organizational members worldwide, including stroke support groups, WSO is the global voice for stroke. WSO is the only international stroke NGO in official relations with the World Health Organization (WHO). Prof. Stephen Davis, MD, FRCP, Edin FRACP, from Melbourne, Australia, is the president of the World Stroke Organization.
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