

Working Group "Hypertension and the Heart"

Report 2004-2005

1. Objectives.

The Working Group has been founded with the aim at investigating the pathophysiologic, clinic and therapeutic implications of the relationship between "Heart and High Blood Pressure". This relationship is to be approached in two directions: the heart as target of systemic hypertension (and thus focusing on cardiac and coronary consequences of a high blood pressure state) and as a prohypertensive mechanism leading to stable blood pressure elevation. During the past year, the WG has focused not only at classic pathophysiological and clinical issues, such as the prognostic relevance of systolic versus diastolic hypertension, borderline and mild hypertension, and the clinical value of the recent information available from ambulatory hypertension but also at "new" topics. These include, for example, 1) the therapeutic relevance of the so-called surrogate endpoints, 2) the interrelationships between high blood pressure and metabolic alterations, including the metabolic syndrome and 3) the diagnostic and therapeutic approach to high risk hypertensive patients. All these interests have been reflected by the relevant number of activities performed by the WG and by the elevated scientific value expressed by the members of the WG at international level, documented both by publications and participation at Meetings.

An important in-progress activity of the WG is related to the improvement of blood pressure control in the hypertensive population. A large amount of data indicate that blood pressure control both in industrialized and in unindustrialized countries is poor and that this problem may trigger a rise in cardiovascular morbidity and mortality rate in the next few years. The WG has been also focusing for a long term on the possibilities to prevent hypertension or at least, its complications: this starts by investigating the prevalence of high blood pressure in different populations to grasp the amplitude of the problem. Interesting data are coming from Eastern European Countries where the western habits have moved in with all consequences on the cardiovascular morbidity and mortality; the prevalence of high blood pressure is following the same trends. Such lends the hand toward the actual prevention. This has to begin by making the population and its health care providers aware of the problem.

Finally, the WG has also focused on the close interrelationships between obesity, metabolic syndrome and blood pressure, trying to improve blood pressure control in this high risk population. Several members of the WG have been giving during this year, talks to the general public and press to clarify the importance of high blood pressure and related comorbidities.

2. Sessions at ESC Meeting 2004 (Munich)

Many of the proposals advanced by this WG have been accepted for the Program of Munich Meeting and were very successful as witnessed by a very large audience in almost all sessions organised by this WG. As in previous occasions, often rooms were too small to accommodate the very large groups of cardiologists interested in the presentations of the WG.

The WG has organised:

- 3 Symposia
- 1 Main session with two debates
- 1 Diabetes Track session
- 1 Clinical Seminar
- 4 abstract sessions
- 4 poster sessions

Members of the WG participated in at least 5 Satellites

3. Sessions at forthcoming ESC Meeting 2005 (Stockholm).

Despite difficulties experienced during the November 2004 Meeting in Nice with other WG in planning sessions for the Stockholm Congress, this WG will organize :

- 1 Symposia
 - 1 Main Session with debate
 - 1 Clinical Seminar
 - 1 Focus Session
- Plus a not yet available number of abstracts and posters sessions.

Members of WG will participate in more than 4 Satellites.

4. Activities outside the main meetings 2004-2005.

The nucleus and other invited members have met at different occasions to talk over scientific aspects, organisation and practical aspects (Milan, October 21 2004, Milan, March 10-12 2005 and June 18-20 2005). The Meeting held in October 2004 was focused on the possible association with other WG (see below). One congress and teaching course has been organised under the auspices of the WG

group: Mechanisms of hypertension" by E.Agabiti-Rosei in Brescia, September 12-17, 2004

The WG is also setting up a vast programme for physicians in order to become qualified as "Hypertension specialists" ; in this respect several very successful teaching meetings have been organised. Also, for training purposes, a core curriculum has been defined.

4. Membership of the WG and future aspects of the WG.

A large interest has been devoted during this year to answer to the president's request in forming an association. Meetings have been held in Munich and in Milan with the WG on peripheral circulation, on cardiovascular drugs and therapy, on prevention and rehabilitation, on epidemiology. The issue on association, however, seems at present (July 2005) not so urgent to be addressed as previously thought, as recent informal talks seem to suggest.

5. Registries.

Members of the WG are working at the approach of the population to get closer information to prevalence numbers of hypertension and blood pressure profiles in their countries. In different countries, active collaboration was granted to the ESC survey on the follow up of treatment of hypertension (Euro-Aspire).

6. Study Groups.

Besides the large number of publications by the members of the WG, the international study from which the protocol was running under the auspices of the ESC and results presented at the ESC, has been published in many journals and discussed on in many meetings. The main publication was done in NEJM 2003, 348: 2407-2415.

Several members of the group have collaborated in writing the new guidelines on hypertension published in J.Hypertension: 2003; 21: 1011-1053. Also from this document many new versions and translations were made all over Europe. An updated version of these ESH/ESC Guidelines will be shortly made with the attempt to have it published by the end of the year.

7. Financial resources

The WG has no financial resources. All its activities (outside the ESC meeting) have up to now been entirely sponsored by the organisers of the different activities.

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Hypertension and the Heart