Worldwide epidemic of hypertension
A Chockalingam, NR Campbell, JG Fodor

The World Health Report 2002 identified hypertension, or high blood pressure, as the third ranked factor for disability-adjusted life years. Hypertension is one of the primary risk factors for heart disease and stroke, the leading causes of death worldwide. Recent analyses have shown that as of the year 2000, there were 972 million people living with hypertension worldwide, and it is estimated that this number will escalate to more than 1.56 billion by the year 2025. Nearly two-thirds of hypertensives live in low- and middle-income countries, resulting in a huge economic burden. Awareness, prevention, treatment and control of hypertension is a significant public health measure. The World Hypertension League, through its national member societies, launched World Hypertension Day in 2005 and, due to its success throughout the world, it has been made an annual event. The 2006 World Hypertension Day was held on May 13; the theme of the day was ‘Treat to Goal’, with a clear intent to ensure patient adherence and control of hypertension worldwide. In Canada, all stakeholders – professional societies, government, nongovernment organizations and industry – are working together to promote awareness of hypertension and to control it.

Key Words: Awareness; Blood pressure control; Hypertension; Prevalence; Public health