

MEDIA RELEASE • COMMUNIQUE AUX MEDIAS • MEDIENMITTEILUNG

#My BP numbers matter - Hypertension is the major risk factor for heart failure

Have your blood pressure tested regularly to avoid severe health complications and a risk of heart disease

Johannesburg, May 07, 2019 – Every year, 17 May is dedicated to World Hypertension Day (WHD), an initiative of the World Hypertension League (WHL) in association with the International Society of Hypertension (ISH). The purpose of WHD is to promote public awareness of hypertension and to encourage citizens of all countries to prevent and control this silent killer.

Hypertension is persistently raised blood pressure, a condition in which the force of the blood against the artery walls is too high. This causes the heart to work harder than normal, which is dangerous as it puts one at high risk for heart disease, strokes, kidney disease and even eye disease.

A study conducted by Wits scientists and peers in 2017 revealed that South Africa has the highest prevalence of hypertension in Southern Africa. It also has the largest number of people whose blood pressure is still not controlled, even whilst on treatment.¹

Professor Michèle Ramsay of the Sydney Brenner Institute for Molecular Bioscience at Wits and Dr Osman Sankoh from the International Network for the Demographic Evaluation of Populations and Their Health (INDEPTH) published the ground-breaking study, which reported on the prevalence of hypertension in approximately 10,000 older people at six sites across sub-Saharan Africa.

The study assessed awareness and control of blood pressure and it revealed astounding results that there were stark differences in the prevalence, awareness, and control of high blood pressure in the cohort studied.

“Hypertension can lead to severe complications and increases the risk of heart disease, stroke and death. While there are some hypertension risk factors that cannot be controlled like age, family history and ethnicity, the idea is to focus on the risk factors that can be changed. Testing regularly so you know your numbers and adopting healthy lifestyle habits can help with managing hypertension and reduce the risk of developing the condition”, says Dr Miles Braithwaite, (Medical Therapeutic Area Head - Primary Care) at Novartis.

To avoid a hypertension diagnosis, adopt these healthy lifestyle choices:

Maintain a healthy weight. When it comes to hypertension prevention, your weight is crucial. It is important to have a talk with your doctor about the ideal weight for you.

¹ <https://www.wits.ac.za/news/latest-news/research-news/2017/2017-06/sa-has-highest-blood-pressure-in-southern-africa.html>

Eat a balanced diet. Eating healthy foods can help keep your blood pressure under control. Get plenty of fruits and vegetables, and limit your intake of excess calories, fat, and sugar.

Reduce salt in your diet. Eating a low-sodium diet can help keep blood pressure at normal levels. You can cut back on your total salt intake by avoiding high-sodium packaged and processed foods and not adding extra salt to your meals.

Exercise regularly. Physical activity helps in preventing hypertension. Moderate exercise for about 30 minutes three times a week is a good start, however the more you exercise, the better.

Cut back on alcohol. Drinking too much alcohol can lead to high blood pressure. For women, that means no more than one drink a day, and for men, no more than two.

Monitor your blood pressure. Make sure that you have your blood pressure measured regularly, either by your doctor, at a local pharmacy by a healthcare professional or at home. High blood pressure often occurs with no symptoms, so only blood pressure readings will alert you that there is a problem.

"Measuring your blood pressure regularly is vital as it alerts you to your numbers and puts you at an advantage of getting treatment, should you be diagnosed with high blood pressure", advised Braithwaite.

For this reason, Novartis, in collaboration with the South African Hypertension Society, is aiming to create awareness and educating people about hypertension and its risk factors. Dischem will be setting up testing stations at various malls around the country. The testing will be done for free and advice will be offered by healthcare professionals. The dates and venues for the different provinces will be confirmed in due course.

Disclaimer

This press release contains forward-looking statements within the meaning of the United States Private Securities Litigation Reform Act of 1995. Forward-looking statements can generally be identified by words such as "potential," "can," "will," "plan," "expect," "anticipate," "look forward," "believe," "committed," "investigational," "pipeline," "launch," or similar terms, or by express or implied discussions regarding potential marketing approvals, new indications or labeling for the investigational or approved products described in this press release, or regarding potential future revenues from such products. You should not place undue reliance on these statements. Such forward-looking statements are based on our current beliefs and expectations regarding future events, and are subject to significant known and unknown risks and uncertainties. Should one or more of these risks or uncertainties materialize, or should underlying assumptions prove incorrect, actual results may vary materially from those set forth in the forward-looking statements. There can be no guarantee that the investigational or approved products described in this press release will be submitted or approved for sale or for any additional indications or labeling in any market, or at any particular time. Nor can there be any guarantee that such products will be commercially successful in the future. In particular, our expectations regarding such products could be affected by, among other things, the uncertainties inherent in research and development, including clinical trial results and additional analysis of existing clinical data; regulatory actions or delays or government regulation generally; global trends toward health care cost containment, including government, payor and general public pricing and reimbursement pressures; our ability to obtain or maintain proprietary intellectual property protection; the particular prescribing preferences of physicians and patients; general political and economic conditions; safety, quality or manufacturing issues; potential or actual data security and data privacy breaches, or disruptions of our information technology systems, and other risks and factors referred to in Novartis AG's current Form 20-F on file with the US Securities and Exchange Commission.

Novartis is providing the information in this press release as of this date and does not undertake any obligation to update any forward-looking statements contained in this press release as a result of new information, future events or otherwise.

About Novartis

Novartis is reimagining medicine to improve and extend people's lives. As a leading global medicines company, we use innovative science and digital technologies to create transformative treatments in areas of great medical need. In our quest to find new medicines, we consistently rank among the world's top companies investing in research and development. Novartis products reach more than 750 million people globally and we are finding innovative ways to expand access to our latest treatments. About 105 000 people of more than 140 nationalities work at Novartis around the world. Find out more at www.novartis.com.

Novartis is on Twitter. Sign up to follow @Novartis at <http://twitter.com/novartis>
For Novartis multimedia content, please visit www.novartis.com/news/media-library
For questions about the site or required registration, please contact media.relations@novartis.com

References:

1. <https://www.hypertension.org.za/pages/about-us>
2. <https://www.everydayhealth.com/hypertension/preventing.aspx>

###

Novartis Media Relations

Central media line: +41 61 324 2200
E-mail: media.relations@novartis.com

Sibonile Dube
Novartis External Communications
+72 66 473 8113 (mobile)
sibonile.dube@novartis.com

Name
Novartis Division Communications
+41 61 324 XXXX (direct)
+41 79 XXX XXXX (mobile)
email.address@novartis.com

Eric Althoff
Novartis US External Communications
+1 646 438 4335
eric.althoff@novartis.com

Novartis Investor Relations

Central investor relations line: +41 61 324 7944
E-mail: investor.relations@novartis.com

Central		North America	
Samir Shah	+41 61 324 7944	Richard Pulik	+1 862 778 3275
Pierre-Michel Bringer	+41 61 324 1065	Cory Twining	+1 862 778 3258
Thomas Hungerbuehler	+41 61 324 8425		
Isabella Zinck	+41 61 324 7188		