



World Kidney Day Press release

KEEP THE PRESSURE DOWN

Brussels 24th February 2009.

Nearly one billion people worldwide have high blood pressure and more than 500 million have chronic kidney disease (CKD). Unchecked high blood pressure may severely damage the kidneys and is a major cause of CKD. World Kidney Day (WKD) - to be held on 12 March 2009 – is encouraging everyone to face up to the harsh realities of kidney disease and motivate people to check if they are at risk. The theme for this year's campaign: '**Keep the Pressure Down**', is highlighting the fact that **high blood pressure** is both a risk factor and symptom of CKD.

Undetected, the risks of CKD cause progressive loss of kidney function eventually leading to the need for dialysis treatment or a kidney transplant. WKD Steering Committee Co-chair Dr. William Couser explains, *"The incidence of CKD is escalating with 10-13% of the population affected in most countries. Added to this, millions are dying prematurely of cardiovascular diseases linked to chronic kidney disease"*. WKD aims to foster more aggressive intervention by physicians to better manage both high blood pressure and CKD, as well as encourage health ministries around the world to invest in preventive measures. *"As the incidence of kidney disease escalates, WKD's crucial role in educating the public, the medical community and governments has never been more important"*, he continued.

Less than 30% of people with CKD are aware they have the condition. Take the recent example of a patient who suffered from high blood pressure for decades. When admitted to hospital, the patient was utterly unaware that her kidney function had been so badly damaged that she nearly died. The World Kidney Day campaign aims to educate the public to be more aware of common risk factors for kidney disease like high blood pressure. If risk factors are present, taking early action to have kidney function measured can help ensure this kind of situation is avoided.

Dr Eberhard Ritz, President of the International Society of Nephrology and co-author of "Hypertension and Chronic Kidney Disease – a marriage that should be prevented"¹ explains: *"the kidney and hypertension are linked by a fateful relationship: the kidney is both culprit and victim. On the one hand, reduced kidney function is a major cause of high blood pressure – on the other hand high blood pressure is a major factor initiating and promoting progressive loss of renal function"*.

The co-sponsors of World Kidney Day: the International Society of Nephrology (ISN) and the International Federation of Kidney Foundations (IFKF) want to ensure that measurement of blood pressure and examination of the urine for protein (an indicator of kidney disease), become part of all routine medical examinations. Paul Beerkens, President of IFKF and co-chair of World Kidney Day explains: *"It is important to encourage public health authorities to raise public awareness of CKD and promote initiatives to reduce the risk of developing hypertension. Such governmental public health initiatives are exemplified by countries like the US, the United Kingdom, Finland and Japan with their actions to reduce the public's consumption of salt, a major contributor to high blood pressure"*.

This year, WKD is collaborating with other relevant groups to get this message out to as many people as possible around the world. WKD 2009 will be conducted for the first time with the official partnership and reciprocal endorsement of the International Society of Hypertension through the World Hypertension League, World Hypertension Day (May 17, 2009) and World Salt Awareness Week (February 1-7, 2009) initiated by the World Action on Salt and Hypertension (WASH).

The WKD campaign would not be possible without the generous support of four global corporate partners: Amgen, Novartis, Roche and Shire as well as the WKD supporter: Abbott. Each of these companies is

¹ Hypertension and Chronic Kidney Disease – a marriage that should be prevented is available on the WKD website: www.worldkidneyday.org/media or through pub med: www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed



committed to raising awareness and helping us lead the important battle against kidney disease and the associated risk factors such as high blood pressure.

The WKD campaign, now running in its fourth consecutive year, is going from strength to strength. On World Kidney Day it is anticipated that more than 100 countries on 6 continents will conduct awareness raising events. The extent, variety and innovative nature of the many WKD activities can be found at: www.worldkidneyday.org. We would be delighted if you would join this momentum and report on the WKD campaign in your publication.

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World Kidney Day is an initiative of the International Society of Nephrology and the International Federation of Kidney Foundations