



CAG

Citizen consumer and civic Action Group

Press Release - World Hypertension Day 2021

For immediate release
Chennai, May 2021

Hypertension - or high blood pressure - is a serious medical condition that is one of the leading causes of death in the world. There is enough evidence after a year of the coronavirus pandemic that people with high blood pressure are more likely to get severely sick or die if they get Covid-19. Given the seriousness of this issue, World Hypertension Day (WHD) is commemorated on May 17 every year, globally. WHD this year aims to promote the message of Measure Your Blood Pressure Accurately, Control It, Live Longer.

In India almost 30% of adults have hypertension and an alarmingly high number are unaware of their condition. The National Health Mission, India states that "hypertension is the number one health related risk factor in India, with the largest contribution to the burden of disease and mortality". A 2014 study (Anchala. R., et al) indicates that in their research cohort only 42% of urban Indians are aware of their hypertension, only 38% are being treated for it and only one-fifth of the cohort had it under control. On the occasion of World Hypertension Day, experts and doctors came together in a clarion call to consider treatment and management of hypertension as a public health priority for India.

To mark the day and to emphasize the need for urgent action on stemming the high prevalence of hypertension, Citizen consumer and civic Action Group (CAG), in association with Tirunelveli District Consumer Awareness Movement, organised a webinar titled, "Hypertension and Cardiovascular Health". Dr E Arunachalam MD DM, Interventional Cardiologist, Aruna Cardiac Care and Dr Hemamalini. AJ, Professor and Head, Department of Clinical Nutrition, Sri Ramachandra Institute of Higher Education and Research (DU) spoke at the event. Both speakers stressed the need for reduced salt intake, avoiding use of tobacco and the importance of a good diet to keep blood pressure within the normal range. The importance of fresh foods as opposed to processed and packaged foods and the need for exercise as opposed to a sedentary lifestyle was a message conveyed strongly by both speakers. S Sathiyavalli, District Curator, Government Museum, Principal, faculty members and students of Sadakathullah Appa College, food business operators and general consumers participated in the event.

Also addressing the audience was Padma Shri Dr Sirkali G. Sivachidambaram, Former Dean, Perambalur Govt Medical college, who described hypertension as the result of several modifiable lifestyle factors including dietary factors such as consumption of salt. “Reduction in salt intake decreases blood pressure levels in people who are already hypertensive. Indians consume more than double the WHO recommended daily limit of salt intake – 5 gms. A lot of this salt comes from processed or packaged food.” Salt reduction is one of the 9 NCD targets proposed by WHO to be achieved by 2025. India too has pledged to attain this voluntary target of 30% reduction in salt/sodium intake by 2025.

Ms S Saroja, director, CAG said, “Unmonitored salt intake poses a significant threat to the health of millions of Indians. To warn consumers of high salt content in foods, we are calling for Front of Package Labels (FoPL). These are messages that need to be conspicuously placed in packaged foods, that will immediately warn consumers about the health risks of what they are about to consume. While India’s Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) introduced FoPL for packaged food under FSS (Labelling and Display) Regulations, in 2018, the regulation needs to be notified at the earliest so that it comes into immediate effect.”

About Citizen consumer and civic Action Group (CAG):

CAG is a 35-year-old non-profit and non-political organisation that works towards protecting citizens' rights in consumer, civic and environmental issues and promoting good governance processes including transparency, accountability and participatory decision-making.

For more information, please contact Savitha T (email) savitha.thirunavukkarasu@cag.org.in or (phone) 9884122398.