



# If hypertension is a puzzle, are pharmacists the missing piece?

HARDLY A DAY GOES BY THAT HYPERTENSION isn't in the news. Whether we're reading scientific articles or consumer materials, we are bombarded with statistics on the subject. Here are some examples:

- Hypertension is a significant risk factor for developing cardiovascular disease. Approximately one-half of adult Canadians are hypertensive by age 60.<sup>1</sup>
- More than one-third of all deaths in Canada in 2002 were due to diseases of the circulatory system (heart disease and stroke).<sup>2</sup>
- Hypertension is the most common diagnosis that results in a visit to a physician's office in Canada.<sup>3</sup>

With all the emphasis on blood pressure and the millions of dollars spent on public education programs, it is amazing that 43% of Canadians who have hypertension don't realize it, and worse, only 13% of known hypertensive patients are adequately treated and controlled.<sup>1</sup> For most hypertensive Canadians, there is still a puzzling gap between awareness and effective action.

So where do pharmacists fit in? In this peer-reviewed supplement, the first in a new series from the *Canadian Pharmacists Journal*, we have assembled Canadian experts to provide you with the knowledge, practical tips, and tools you need to maximize your contribution to the care of hypertensive patients. We profile interesting hypertension projects involving community pharmacists and bring you different viewpoints on how to manage these patients.

Most importantly, this supplement includes the first ever nationally recognized, peer-reviewed practice guidelines developed specifically for Canadian pharmacists. These guidelines highlight the opportunities for pharmacists to become fully engaged as primary health care providers, collaborating with physicians and other health care professionals for the benefit of the millions of patients at risk from undiagnosed or uncontrolled hypertension. Our thanks go to our esteemed guest editors, Richard Lewanczuk, Luc Poirier, and Bill

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With physicians and patients looking to pharmacists to play an increased role in hypertension management, perhaps we're the piece that's been missing. I look forward to hearing of your successes.

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## References

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2. Statistics Canada. Mortality, summary list of causes — 2002. Available: [www.statcan.ca](http://www.statcan.ca) (accessed March 24, 2006).
3. IMS Health. Prescription drug purchases by Canadian hospitals and pharmacies reach \$16.57 billion in 2005. Available: [www.imshealthcanada.com/htmen/1\\_0\\_26.htm](http://www.imshealthcanada.com/htmen/1_0_26.htm) (accessed March 21, 2006).

THE CONTENT OF THIS SUPPLEMENT HAS BEEN PEER REVIEWED.