

The Accuracy in Measurement of Blood Pressure (AIM-BP) Collaborative: Background and

Rationale

Raj Padwal MD,¹ Norm RC Campbell MD,² Michael A Weber MD,³ Daniel Lackland DrPH,⁴ Daichi Shimbo MD,⁵ Xin-Hua Zhang MD,⁶ Aletta E. Schutte PhD,⁷ Michael Rakotz MD,⁸ Gregory Wozniak PhD,⁹ Raymond Townsend MD,¹⁰ Richard McManus MD,¹¹ Kei Asayama MD,¹² Dean Picone PhD,¹³ Jordy Cohen MD,¹⁴ Tammy Brady MD,¹⁵ Michael Hecht-Olsen MD,¹⁶ Christian Delles MD,¹⁷ Bruce Alpert MD,¹⁸ Richard Dart MD,¹⁹ Donald J DiPette PhD,²⁰ James E. Sharman PhD²¹ for the Accuracy in Measurement of Blood Pressure Collaborative

¹Department of Medicine, University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada

²Department of Medicine, Physiology and Pharmacology and Community Health Sciences, O'Brien Institute for Public Health and Libin Cardiovascular Institute of Alberta, University of Calgary, Calgary, AB, Canada

³Division of Cardiovascular Medicine, SUNY Downstate Medical Center, Brooklyn, New York

⁴Division of Translational Neurosciences and Population Studies, Department of Neurology, Medical University of South Carolina, Charleston, South Carolina, United States

⁵Columbia Hypertension Center, Columbia University Medical Center, New York, NY, USA

⁶World Hypertension League, Beijing, China

⁷MRC Unit for Hypertension and Cardiovascular Disease, Hypertension in Africa Research Team (HART), North-West University, Potchefstroom, South Africa

⁸American Medical Association, Chicago, Illinois, USA

⁹American Medical Association, Chicago, Illinois, USA

¹⁰Raymond R. Townsend, Perelman School of Medicine, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, USA

¹¹Nuffield Department of Primary Care Health Sciences, University of Oxford, Radcliffe Observatory Quarter, Woodstock Road, Oxford, UK

¹²Department of Hygiene and Public Health, Teikyo University School of Medicine, Tokyo, Japan; Tohoku Institute for Management of Blood Pressure, Sendai, Japan; Research Unit Hypertension and Cardiovascular Epidemiology, KU Leuven Department of Cardiovascular Sciences, University of Leuven, Leuven, Belgium.

¹³Menzies Institute for Medical Research, University of Tasmania, Australia

¹⁴Renal-Electrolyte and Hypertension Division, Perelman School of Medicine, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, USA

¹⁵Division of Pediatric Nephrology, Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, Baltimore, Maryland, USA

¹⁶Department of Internal Medicine, Holbaek Hospital, Centre for Individualized Medicine in Arterial Disease, University of Southern Denmark

¹⁷Christian Delles, Institute of Cardiovascular and Medical Sciences, University of Glasgow, Glasgow, UK

¹⁸Professor of Pediatrics, Division of Cardiology, University of Tennessee Health Science Center, Memphis, Tennessee, USA (retired)

¹⁹Center for Precision Medicine and Research, Marshfield Clinic Research Institute, Marshfield, Wisconsin, USA

²⁰Health Sciences Distinguished Professor, University of South Carolina, University of South Carolina School of Medicine, Columbia, South Carolina, USA

²¹Menzies Institute for Medical Research, University of Tasmania, Australia

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Correspondence to (no reprints available):

Raj Padwal

Clinical Epidemiology, Clinical Pharmacology and General Internal Medicine

Professor of Medicine and Director, Hypertension Clinic, University of Alberta

5-134A Clinical Sciences Building, 11350 - 83rd Ave

Edmonton, Alberta, Canada

T6G 2G3

780-492-3686 (phone); 780-407-7277 (fax); rpadwal@ualberta.ca

ABSTRACT

Accurate blood pressure (BP) measurement, a fundamental pre-requisite for the proper diagnosis and management of hypertension, is often disregarded in clinical practice. Although many past initiatives have focused on eliminating poor BP measurement technique, additional coordinated collaboration and action is required because the problem persists. The Accuracy in Measurement of BP (AIM-BP) Collaborative has been formed to identify, disseminate and implement best measurement practices globally. AIM-BP is comprised of academics, clinicians, professional societies, non-governmental organizations, and additional stakeholders who have expertise and interest in accurate BP measurement. AIM-BP also includes an industry advisory group. The Collaborative aims to: 1. publish a series of articles in the *Journal of Clinical Hypertension* detailing developments and challenges in the field; 2. host a webpage on the World Hypertension League website summarizing critical information and resources for clinicians and patients; and 3. promote sustainable advances in accurate BP measurement globally through education, training, and policy.

Key Words: blood pressure measurement, oscillometry, validation, accuracy

Blood pressure (BP) measurement, a technique first described over a century ago, is an essential component of clinical care and critical for the detection and management of hypertension. [1] Accordingly, the ramifications of inaccurate BP measurement, which is a persistent and pervasive problem worldwide, are profound.[2] Assuming a global prevalence of hypertension of 1.4 billion,[3] a 5-mmHg error in BP measurement has been estimated to result in the incorrect classification of hypertension status in at least 84 million individuals worldwide.[4] In addition, incorrect classification has important ramifications for individual patients, whether it leads to misdiagnosis and inappropriate prescribing of antihypertensive drugs, or to lack of recognition of an important clinical condition that can cause important cardiovascular consequences. The continued rise in the global prevalence of hypertension has made work related to optimizing BP measurement even more critical and, notwithstanding similar initiatives that have been conducted or are ongoing, additional efforts to improve BP measurement on a global scale are clearly needed. [5]

The Accuracy in Measurement of BP (AIM-BP) Collaborative, which has been formed to advance and amplify past and current work, is focused on advocating for and implementing optimal BP measurement practices globally. This collaborative is intended to be complimentary, and not competitive to, existing efforts in the field of BP measurement. The Lancet Commission on Hypertension Group and the World Hypertension League are lead organizations. AIM-BP is comprised of academics, clinicians, professional societies, non-governmental organizations, and additional stakeholders that have expertise and interest in the field of BP measurement. An advisory group of members from industry has also been created because these stakeholders

can make important contributions, but their input remains independent of priority setting.

Three major initial objectives have been identified: 1. publish a series of articles in the *Journal of Clinical Hypertension* detailing developments and challenges in the field; 2. host a webpage on the World Hypertension League website that summarizes critical information and resources for clinicians and patients and 3. advocate for policies that are supportive of accurate BP assessment (e.g. certification of training in BP assessment, accreditation of health facilities, mandating use of validated BP devices etc.). It is expected that this work will catalyze further initiatives and collaborative efforts moving forward.

Many unresolved issues and challenges exist in the field (Table 1). Lack of performance of standardized measurement in clinical settings continues to be a major contributor to inaccurate BP measurement.[4] Use of validated, automated devices and protocolized technique is recommended to simplify the measurement process, ensuring closer adherence to recommended practice. Training of observers (healthcare providers measuring BP) is critical but needs to be done efficiently and with little or no added cost. An example is to use short, simple, web-based, whiteboard animation educational videos to summarize the essentials of BP measurement. These can be quickly viewed and reviewed as needed. A series of videos on this topic has been produced at Johns Hopkins University and these are easily and freely accessible (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T9J3RE4Eins>). Dissemination of these resources and translation into multiple languages are needed to reach the global audience. Similar videos could be made to provide guidance on related topics in BP measurement – such as describing

how best to implement a BP measurement station in a busy clinic to maximize accuracy and clinical efficiency.

Another major issue of interest is use of automated BP measurement, which is the primary method recommended for simplifying the BP measurement process. Clinical validation of these oscillometric BP measurement devices to confirm accuracy relative to blinded, two-observer auscultation is needed before such devices are released into the market. Unfortunately, this is not mandated by global regulatory agencies and, consequently, many devices available worldwide are not validated.[6] The widespread availability of unvalidated oscillometric devices is a major barrier to accurate BP measurement. Additional important issues that require clarification (Table 1) include achieving consensus on which clinical validation protocols should be used, determining how best to make validated device listings available to clinicians and patients in a user-friendly format that is locally relevant, and empowering local contract research organizations to perform validations at a cost that does not deter manufacturers from performing such studies.

With increasing emphasis being placed on out-of-office BP measurement as the preferred means of diagnosing and following-up patients with hypertension, there is a need to ensure that recommended procedures for performing home BP and 24-hour ambulatory BP monitoring are followed.[7–9] Recently published data have confirmed that patients do not often follow proper home BP measurement and reporting protocols.[10] While a substantial amount of effort has been invested in outlining procedures for out-of-office BP measurement, relatively

little time has been spent on implementing mechanisms that enable these procedures to be done correctly and this is expected to be an additional focus of AIM-BP.

The need for an easy to access, free central repository for the general public, patients and physicians that summarizes reliable and essential information and displays links to useful resources is clear. Providing a venue to promote regional, national and international initiatives aimed at improving BP measurement is also a necessary element for a successful program. In this regard, the participation of the Lancet Commission on Hypertension Group, Journal of Clinical Hypertension, and World Hypertension League in the AIM-BP collaborative is of critical importance because these entities are committed to the open access of information and dedicated to improving hypertension on a global level. It is important that information be presented in an actionable and user-friendly format.

A foundational element of AIM-BP is that it is an inclusive and collaborative initiative. As such, membership is open, and we invite individuals or entities with an interest in promoting evidence-based, accurate BP measurement to join. Although much needs to be done, we anticipate that our combined efforts will result in improved BP measurement and, ultimately, better diagnosis and assessment of BP-related conditions on a global scale.

Financial conflicts of interest and disclosures: This project is unfunded. Raj Padwal is Co-Founder and CEO of mmHg Inc., a University of Alberta based startup creating software and hardware solutions to improve blood pressure measurement. Richard J McManus has received BP monitors for research purposes from Omron. Norm Campbell was a paid consultant to the Novartis Foundation (2016-2017) to support their program to improve hypertension control in low to middle income countries which includes travel support for site visits and a contract to develop a survey; has provided paid consultative advice on accurate blood pressure assessment to Midway Corporation (2017); and is an unpaid member of World Action on Salt and Health (WASH). Bruce Alpert is a consultant for development of BP technology for Welch Allyn/Hill Rom, Midmark, and Aktia. Donald DiPette serves as a consultant to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), World Health Organization (WHO), and the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO). Michael Hecht-Olsen received a part-time research grant from Novo Nordic Foundation (2013-18). Michael Rakotz and Gregory Wozniak are employees of the American Medical Association. Aletta Schutte has received speaker honoraria from Novartis, Omron, Takeda and Servier and paid consultative advice to Abbot Pharmaceuticals. She is funded by the South African Medical Research Council and National Research Foundation (SARChI). James Sharman has no personal disclosures; however, his university has received equipment and research funding from manufacturers of BP devices including AtCor Medical, IEM and Pulsecor (Uscom). Kei Asayama is a consultant for Omron Healthcare. Richard McManus is Chair of the British and Irish Hypertension Society BP measurement working party; has received BP monitors for research use from Omron; and his institution has received research grants from

the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) and Stroke Association/British Heart Foundation for work on self-monitoring of hypertension.

AIM-BP Organizational Members: World Hypertension League (lead), Lancet Commission on Hypertension Group (lead), American Medical Association, Hypertension Canada, British and Irish Society of Hypertension, Japanese Society of Hypertension, Danish Hypertension Society

AIM-BP Industry Advisory Members: David Quinn (Hillrom), Josh Sarkis (PharmaSmart), and Jim Li (Omron)

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