

## UFRGS awards Paul Whelton the Doctor Honoris Causa title



**Professor at the Tulane University School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine (New Orleans, Louisiana) was recognized for outstanding achievements in his research studies on blood pressure and cardiovascular diseases**

In a solemn session, Paul Kieran Whelton, an Irish researcher settled in the United States, was awarded the Doctor Honoris Causa by the Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS). This is a recognition for his contribution to the fields of prevention and treatment of high blood pressure.

Whelton used to be a professor at the Johns Hopkins University, and currently he serves as Chwan Health System Endowed Chair in Global Public Health at Tulane University School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine. He has carried out important global studies in the fields of cardiology and epidemiology, such as the Antihypertensive and Lipid-Lowering Treatment to Prevent Heart Attack Trial (ALLHAT), the largest clinical trial which compared the effectiveness of different drugs to treat hypertension and prevent myocardial infarction.

In Brazil, Whelton was a co-investigator of the PREVER-prevention Study (Hypertension Prevention in Pre-Hypertensive Individuals), funded by the Ministry of Health, and the Ministry of Science and Technology, which involved more than 18,000 people in 22 academic centers – including the Clinical Hospital of Porto Alegre. The work was crucial for the creation of the New American Hypertension Guidelines, which modified the blood pressure categories, aiming to reduce mortality and complications related to the disease. These guidelines recommend treatment of individuals as early as during the prehypertensive phase. Thus, it is believed there will be a drastic risk reduction of hypertensive patients in the future.

Sandra Fuchs, the speaker of the solemn session, was one of the coordinators of PREVER-Prevention at the Clinical Hospital. Fuchs praised Paul Whelton's commitment to the study and his invaluable contribution to the field of cardiology. "The information obtained in this study saved lives, since there is a relationship between hypertension and mortality due to cardiovascular causes," she highlighted.

The UFRGS' President, Rui Vicente Oppermann, pointed out the importance of research in this field, since currently the major causes of mortality in Brazil are no longer transmissible diseases, as it used to be in the past, but cardiovascular diseases instead. "Prevention is a very important step in the health field. With preventive health care, we may increase the longevity and improve the quality of life of the population," he said.

In his speech, Whelton gave the audience a brief report of his research. He stressed the importance of non-pharmacological measures in the control of blood pressure, such as changes in the hypertensive patients' diet, physical activity, and reduction in alcohol consumption. The researcher also presented strategies for increasing treatment adherence, such as prescription of combined drugs, and/or drugs to be taken only once a day. At the end, he thanked UFRGS for the recognition and acknowledged the contribution of family, co-workers, funding agencies, patients, and researchers. "Science is a teamwork. I am lucky to have worked with a great team," he concluded.

*Translated into English by Anderson Moreira Duarte, under the supervision and translation revision of Elizamari R. Becker (P.h.D.) – IL/UFRGS.*

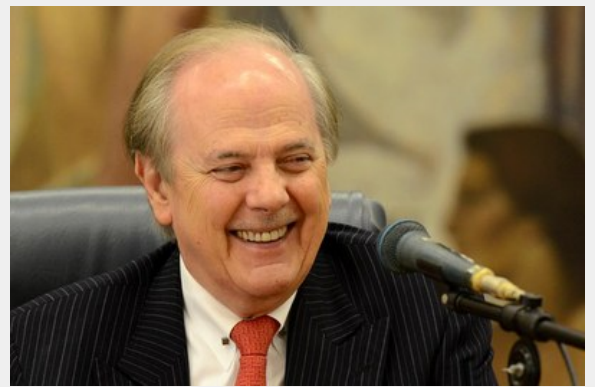


Image: Gustavo Diehl

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