

Tulane professor wins heart association's excellence award

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Dr. Paul Whelton led the team behind last year's blockbuster announcement that redefined high blood pressure for the first time in 14 years.

Dr. Paul Whelton, a clinical professor and the Show Chwan Health System Endowed Chair in Global Public Health at Tulane University School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine, has been recognized with the American Heart Association 2018 Excellence Award for Hypertension Research. The award is considered one of the most prestigious awards for a researcher in the field of hypertension.

Whelton led the team behind last year's blockbuster announcement that redefined high blood pressure for the first time in 14 years. The new guidelines lower the threshold for high blood pressure diagnosis, resulting in almost half of U.S. adults being considered hypertensive.

The new clinical guideline eliminates "prehypertension" and defines high blood pressure as beginning at 130/80 mm Hg instead of 140/90 mm Hg. The recommendations call for earlier and more intensive treatment with lifestyle changes and, in some cases, medication.

The goal is to help patients better understand their cardiovascular risk and attain more effective control of high blood pressure so they can address it sooner, said Whelton, chairman of the American Heart Association (AHA)/American College of Cardiology (ACC) Hypertension Guidelines Committee.

"It is a wonderful privilege to be selected as the 2018 recipient of the American Heart Association Excellence Award for Hypertension Research. It reflects the contributions of many colleagues including the exceptionally strong team in hypertension research at Tulane," said Whelton, who also received the national American Heart Association Population Research Prize in 2007.

The AHA award honors excellence in research and discoveries in the field of hypertension as well as a researcher's contributions. The selection committee assesses the candidates' impact on their fields throughout their productive careers as well as any single discovery.