

Meeting Report

The tenth meeting of the European Histamine Research Society was held in Hannover, West Germany, in May 1981 at the kind invitation of Prof. K.Fr Sewing. It was attended by over 100 members and guests, who were accommodated at the Crest Hotel. The weather was hot and everything was in first-class condition. The arrangements could not have been better. Most of the participants arrived early on the Tuesday for the informal get-together and the meeting for underway on Wednesday when the topics discussed were Histamine in the Central Nervous System, Histamine Metabolism, Histamine and the cardiovascular System, and the Pathophysiology of Histamine. The first day was notable for the lighter side of presentation of papers and lively discussions. A few examples illustrate this point. From Paris, we heard that 'Our assistant left the department some time ago and so injections could not be made on Saturdays and Sundays as no one was available'; from Stockholm, it was said that 'Pregnant mouse kidney shows radioactivity but in the male mouse we can only guess where the kidney is as it has no radioactivity'; from Lodz, the authors were insistent that 'Our enzyme is still living being purified by Werle who is also still living' and from Florence, the comment came that 'Guinea-pigs sometimes die, sometimes do not, sometimes die frequently but do not die spontaneously – only automatically'.

The main lecture of the meeting was given by Bertil Diamant from Copenhagen. It was entitled 'Histamine secretion: Research in retrospective'. Dr Diamant traced the advances made in this field of histamine release from isolated mast cells stressing in particular the factors involved in stimulus secretion-coupling using different agents. It was well presented and enjoyed by all present, even those not working in this particular area of histamine research.

The evening dinner was held in the cellars of the Town Hall where a fabulous meal of meal course was served. Before the food, however we were all invited to participate in an old Hannovarian custom of drinking from two glasses at once, the cognac being held over the beer but mixed before contact with the mouth. Suitable protective clothing was provided for the members who were in doubt about success. After the attempts, certificates were distributed to those who performed the act without spilling a drop. Dr Sewing gave a few words of welcome and thanks to his staff, Dr Uvnäs gave a short speech on Young Histaminologists, and Dr West rounded off the evening with a few stories of doubtful scientific origin (some we had heard before!)

On the Thursday, the topics were more about the Pathophysiology of Histamine and a very good session on Histamine and the Gastrointestinal Tract. Comments this day included the following – 'We did not check that histamine lowered the adrenalin content of the adrenals of patients because it was not possible to do this as the patients were volunteers'; 'There are sex differences in nude and normal male and female mice but is this so in Man (or should it be Woman?)'; and 'How does HIS-PHE compete with HD for ACID in gastric fistula rats'.

On the Thursday afternoon, all the participants were taken by coach for a sightseeing visit to Celle, a town thirty miles to the north of Hannover. We all enjoyed the visit to the castle (for the appreciation of the self-contained magnificent private theatre and chapel) and to the town (to study the sixteenth century buildings. The weather was kind and we lost no-one! However, two who were left behind in Hannover caught up with us about teatime when we moved to the Wienhausen Convent. Here we split into three parties for the tour of this ancient building. Parts of the convent were most interesting and gave us the feeling of like in the Middle Ages in such an institution.

Needless to say, it was to be expected that such nuns never reached a great age, as life was so secluded (mean life span was only 28 years). And so back to Hannover for the Official Dinner in a hotel in the depths of a dense wood. Again it was another super effort, whilst lightning and thunderstorms rumbled outside. The evening was noted for its entertainment by different histaminologists, some of high repute. It all finished with the singing of the International Anthem of the Histaminologists of Europe.

Friday was an unusual morning, for just after the start of the Histamine Release Discussions the news came that London Airport was on strike. The 22-strong British party had suddenly to decide what to do – and even more suddenly had to disappear at the coffee break, so as to catch an earlier transfer plane! The scientific session proceeded as planned and the meeting ended at lunchtime, after discussions during the Annual General Meeting about the next meeting (at Lubjiana), membership fees, publication of the proceedings, and a crest to represent the society. Our sincerest thanks fo to all the staff at Hannover for a meeting of the highest quality, both scientifically and socially.

G.B.West, Secretary-General (London)

Postscript: After the meeting, the Secretary was called to the Police on two accounts – first, to sign the death certificate of a man who had just been found(after 3 weeks) and second to assist in the recovery of passport, visa, money, clothes and Society papers of our Polish National Secretary (thought to have been stolen).