

Meeting Report 1991

The twentieth meeting of the European Histamine Research Society (EHRS) was held in Marburg, Germany in May 1991, at the kind invitation of Professor Wilfried Lorenz. It was attended by over 200 members and guests, with representatives from 20 European and 5 non-European countries. The weather was for the most part good and any rain showers did not last very long. After the opening speeches, we conferred the title of Honorary Member of the EHRS. We have had only two previous honorary members: Professors Parrot and Schild. Fred Pearce held a very moving address for the late Geoff West and accepted the beautiful scroll on behalf of his wife, Jean. Wilfried Lorenz performed the same honour for Börje Uvnäs, who accepted it graciously. Our society owes a great debt to these men, who with their broad-based knowledge have enriched our meetings. The Plenary Lecture was given by J. Moss (Chicago, USA) and was entitled 'The impact of histamine research on clinical anaesthesia'. He brought some local colour into his talk, reminding us that Hans Horst Meyer had first studied anaesthetics in Marburg. We heard a very clear account of the role of histamine in adverse reactions to anaesthetics, the difficulties of choosing the right end points for clinical trials, regional differences in the susceptibility of patients etc. Indeed for the lay person, anaesthesia seems to be a very dangerous process but luckily we were also reminded of the efficacy of a prophylaxis with H₁- and H₂-receptor antagonists. There was a lively period of questions at the end of his talk, ending only due to the call of coffee before the other communications began! The remainder of the first day was characterised by a new development for our society - the introduction of parallel sittings. Whilst it was realised that the great number of submitted abstracts necessitated this departure

from tradition, many members were unhappy that they had to miss some of the exciting new findings. The Symposium entitled 'Histamines and antihistamines in anaesthesia and surgery' continued with the theme of the Plenary Lecture. It contained a well-balanced mixture of clinical trials, in vivo studies with volunteers or animals and in vitro experiments with mast cells or basophils. The parallel session covered a number of topics including: 'Histamine and the gastrointestinal tract', 'Histamine and tumours', 'Histamine assays and metabolism', the 'Physiology and pathophysiology of histamine and the nervous system', and 'Studies of mediator release in vitro'. The sessions ended at 18.30. The accompanying persons had been treated to a guided tour of Marburg including the Castle, the old university and the gothic Elisabethkirche. In the evening we had an enjoyable meal in the City Hall followed by visits to the student pubs by most of the participants! Notwithstanding the revels of the previous night, the session on 'Histamine and inflammatory responses' starting at 8.30 am on Friday was very well attended. This was followed by a session on 'Special problems in inflammation research', after an excellent buffet lunch together with the accompanying persons, we were driven through the countryside to Kassel. We had a short stop in the town before being driven to Wilhelmshöhe. Some members were drawn to the Rembrandt pictures in the art gallery, whilst others strolled round the magnificent parkland and the hardiest climbed hundreds of steps up to the Wilhelm's Monument. We dined in the Elector's Castle at Waldeck with a view over the Eder lake and dam. After dinner we had tours of the dungeons and old castle well - so deep that it takes around 8 seconds to hear the splash when water is dropped in it. The morning session on Saturday started with 'Histamine receptors: experimental and clinical pharmacology' as well as the 'Cardiovascular system'. The afternoon was devoted to 'Histamine release and signal transduction'. The General

Assembly passed the new statutes of the EHRS with very little discussion. We decided to rename the Plenary Lecture -the West Lecture and after a minute's silence we heard part of our anthem in Geoff's memory. The accompanying persons spent the morning visiting several of the original sites told about in Grimm's fairytales and received a lovely booklet with copies of the original illustrations. In the evening our banquet was held in the splendid Knights Hall in Marburg's Castle. We were entertained first by music with fairytale connections followed by a fairytale meal! In respect to Geoff we did not sing our International Anthem this year. However, Anita Sydbom had by request of the Secretary General composed a song about Marburg to the tune of 'Music, Music, Music'. So we did have some communal singing! Our thanks go to Wilfried and Margit for organising the scientific and social side of our meeting so well. The next meeting will be held in Torremolinos-Malaga, Spain between the 13-17 May 1991.

Madeleine Ennis (Belfast)

