

Meeting Report 1993

Madeleine Ennis, Belfast

The twenty-second annual meeting of the European Histamine Research Society (EHRS) was held in Cologne, Germany in May 1993 at the kind invitation of Dr. Eddy Neugebauer. It was attended by 245 participants from 25 European and five non-European countries. About 150 communications were given including 65 oral presentations and 50 plenary posters. Our initial "get together" was held in the Colonia Tower, the highest building in Cologne which at 266 m is 100 m taller than the famous spires of the cathedral. This meeting enabled us to meet old friends whilst doing some very easy sightseeing! The Cologne group had prepared a wonderful slide show depicting various famous sights associated with this city. In the excitement of the evening, Eddy was not too sure about how old Cologne was; this was very important since there are the same number of pubs as the age of the city. Luckily, Wilfried Lorenz was on hand, to remind Eddy that Cologne was 2000 and not 200 years old. The meeting opened in great style. Hans Troidl (Cologne) showed us slides of some famous histaminologists including Code, Black and a very youthful Bavarian. He discussed the problems associated with contemporary research, industrially driven versus scientifically driven, the fact that medicine is becoming more a business than a profession and that all the scoring systems and indices will not automatically improve patient care or research output. The Deputy Dean of the Faculty of Medicine was introduced as coming from Marburg but Professor Addicks had a good sense of humour and said that, as Cologne was everywhere, this did not matter! Our General Secretary, Professor Mannaioni, then introduced Professor Roberto Levi, who gave the G.B. West Memorial Lecture entitled "Histamine the

Heart of the Matter". It was very interesting to hear that as a young man leaving Florence, Professor Levi had smuggled a Langendorff apparatus into the States; he assured us that he is still using this precious equipment! About 10% of sudden cardiac deaths occur in the absence of significant coronary, myocardial and valvular disease. Levi provided evidence that mediators of inflammation may play a significant role. The putative protective role of bradykinin may be mediated either by a limited local accumulation of NO and/or PGI₂. The role of histamine H₃ receptors in the heart was also discussed. Activation of the H₃ receptor attenuates the response to stellate ganglia stimulation in the whole heart and blockade of the H₃ receptor potentiates the cardiac chronotropic response to adrenergic nerve stimulation. Levi's concluding statement was that cardiac histamine is here to stay! The morning provided further evidence for this with five talks in the session on Histamine and the Cardiovascular System (CVS). This was followed by a symposium on the second major topic of the meeting: Histamine and the Central Nervous System (CNS). In the afternoon we divided to attend the sessions entitled "Histamine and the CVS" and "Histamine and Mast Cells" or "Histamine and Cell Growth" and "Histamine and the CNS". The topics covered in the meetings naturally depend on that which the members offer; however, the resurgence of interest in the CNS and in cell growth has been encouraged by various society members. It would be interesting to see if we could now focus more attention on signal transduction pathways and molecular biology as well as on more traditional receptor chemistry/pharmacology.

The social programme included guided tours of the famous "Römisch Germanisches Museum" and the cathedral. The evening's events catered to our various needs: a tour of the Walraff-Richartz/Ludwig Museum looking at art from the middle ages to the present day. This was followed by a classical concert with music by Quantz, Ibert,

Villa-Lobos and Handel. We then adjourned to the Sion brewery/pub, where we were well-fed and drank the typical Kölsch beer in tiny glasses (0.2 l). This measure is to ensure that only fresh beer is enjoyed by the guests!

Friday began very early at 6.45 for the runners and supporters of the EHRS first 5 km fun run. The rest of us began the day with sessions on "Histamine and Diverse Cell Types", "Histamine and the GI-Tract" or "Histamine and the CNS". At one talk we heard that there were problems when extrapolating data on the beneficial physiological effects of histamine obtained using healthy volunteers (<40 years old) to the clinical situation since "histamine is a physiological molecule which evolved millions of years ago when most humans were less than 40 years old". Our excursion was a trip on the Rhine on the "MS Siebengebirge". We visited the Palais Schaumburg - the Bundeskanzleramt home of former Chancellors such as Konrad Adenauer. Eddy looked very comfortable seated at the Chancellor's desk -perhaps he has some political aspirations? The winners of the fun run were announced on the trip: joint first were Annette Hills (Germany) and Hendrik Jorgenen (Denmark) both with the same time: 14.42min. All participants received a hand-drawn medal, including a male or female mouse as appropriate, and a certificate. The three grandfathers who took part were also awarded a teddy bear each!

Saturday found the whole meeting together again and we concentrated first on the more clinical aspects: "Histamine in Pathological Conditions" and "Histamine in Anaesthesia and Surgery" followed by the "Pharmacology of Histamine". The farewell dinner was held in the Wolkenburg, a former convent now owned by the Cologne Choral Society. The food was excellent, we were indeed very spoilt throughout our stay in Cologne and the music encouraged lots of people to dance and enjoy themselves. The winner of the first G.B. West Memorial Prize was Mojca Krzan, from

the University of Ljubljana, Slovenia. Poster prizes were awarded to Clements (first), Baumert (second) and Mousli (third). The poster jury decided that in future the same group may not win a poster prize in successive years which was well accepted. There was also a suggestion that the fun run be increased by 1 km each year but hopefully that will not be put into practice; otherwise, we may end up running a marathon! In view of the exceedingly short time at their disposal to arrange the meeting, the Neugebauers and their helpers are to be heartily congratulated on organizing such a smooth running and enjoyable conference. The next meeting will be held between 18-21 May in Budapest, Hungary at the kind invitation of Zsuzsanna Huszti