

Meeting Report 1995

The twenty-fourth meeting of the European Histamine Research Society was held on board the Nikolai Bauman in May 1995 at the kind invitation of Professor Igor Gushchin. It was attended by 63 active participants and 7 accompanying persons, with representatives from most European countries as well as Argentina. The weather was very hot and sunny and in the free periods many delegates became red or brown - depending on their skin type! The boat was comfortable and the food was both good and plentiful - as were the Russian wine, champagne and vodka! As stated by Igor, this meeting was the first of our society to be held in Russia and due to various circumstances had been long in the planning. We were welcomed by Professor Mashkovsky, the Honorary President of the All-Russian Pharmacological Society who had worked on anti-histamines for many decades. Professor Ifanteyev, Chief of the Research Department at the Ministry of Public Health and Medical Industry in Russia, stressed the importance of such international meetings for academics to discuss their work. Our Secretary General, Professor Mannaioni, started his address in Russian and said that this trip was a fulfillment of one of his boyhood dreams.

This meeting enabled delegates to discuss their work and problems, as well as other matters, at all hours. It reverted to our old pattern of no simultaneous sessions, which helped the participants to learn about all aspects of histamine research. We sailed from Moscow to Kostroma and the meeting was scheduled around visits to the old Russian towns of the Golden Ring, enabling the best possible use of our time. Although we had the benefit of three excursions we didn't work less than in other years!

The Plenary Conference Lecture held by Professor Walter Schunack (Berlin) was entitled *Design of H₃ receptor agonists and antagonists*. This very clear and interesting presentation told us about where H₃ receptors occur and their function. H₃ agonists inhibit bronchoconstriction and microvascular leakage, as well as promoting deep sleep. H₃ antagonists depress appetite and have a role in epilepsy, Alzheimer's disease, schizophrenia as well as stimulating gastrointestinal motility. He gave us the rationale behind the design of both agonists and antagonists, although we were depressed when he could not tell us about a very potent compound currently under patent protection! After coffee, the theme of histamine receptors and their antagonists was expanded by several authors and the King of the Histamine Receptor agents (WS) was evident as a co-author on many of them! There was a lively debate on side effects of drugs - are doses given in the gram range worse than those given in the

milligram range or not? The afternoon sessions covered *Histamine release, metabolism and cell regulation* and *Histamine circulation and blood platelets*. A popular topic this year was free radicals and scavengers and their effects in different models. Although, we know that bacteria and viruses can cause/modulate histamine release we now found that we are not safe from microfungi either! The accompanying persons had a city tour of Moscow and one struggled back with a beautiful rug. In the evening, an impromptu party was held with Romano Fassachov playing the piano and singing - if this man gives up research he could become a professional. Everyone joined in dancing and singing helped along by Georgian red wine and of course the obligatory vodka!

The second day started with *Histamine and the central nervous system*, where the common problem of whether drugs or their metabolites cross the blood brain barrier was extensively discussed. This was followed by *Histamine and the gastrointestinal tract*, which included discussions on the problems of patient compliance and the meaning of significance related to correlations. In the afternoon we visited Uglich and its Kremlin, which is a fortified construction consisting of a palace for the ruler and one or more churches. The turbulent history of Russia meant that only the part of the palace used for greeting guests had survived. It contained beautiful household and church embroideries as well as items for daily use. In the church built on the site where the young Saint Dmitri was brutally murdered, we found an unusual fresco for an orthodox church containing naked figures. In the cathedral we heard a group of young men singing ecclesiastical songs; with the superb acoustics they sounded like a choir of angels. In the Chaika watch factory, we were greeted with bread and salt and visited the museum with watches decorated with filigree, enamel and semi-precious stones. The mayor of Uglich welcomed us to her town, which she felt was the most beautiful on the golden Ring. At the end of the reception several delegates left clutching lilac. In Russia, if you find a lilac blossom with 5 petals instead of the usual 4, you eat the blossom to get good luck! After such enjoyable outing, we returned to the session *Histamine and neuroendocrine control*. In the evening, we were entertained by a dancing competition including displays of the waltz, tango, boogie-woogie and "Russian" folk dancing. It was won by Rado and Tatjana, with a special prize for Sven and Emanuela for their horizontal landing!

The next day we began with a tour of Yaroslav which was held at a brisk pace by a guide who wanted us to see all the interesting sites of the town in a limited time period! The afternoon began with the session *Histamine and cell growth* concentrating mainly on the involvement of histamine in cancer. We

then visited Kostroma with its fabulous Ipatyevsky Monastery, as well as the open air museum of wooden architecture. After dinner, we had a singing competition with examples of folksongs from different nations and Anita made up to Eddy for not composing a song for the Cologne meeting! The competition was won by Claudia - the romantic Latin singing stirred our heart strings. However, the sight of Frans, dressed in his duvet topped by his wash bag, together with his lively carnival song prompted a special prize!

The final day started with *Mast cells/basophils, inflammation and allergy*. The use of basophil histamine release tests in allergy diagnosis was much discussed, as were changes in releasability caused by disease. In the afternoon our attention was turned to more clinical matters: *Histamine release in surgery, trauma and shock* and *Histamine and pathological conditions*. The number of reported adverse reactions to drugs and radiographic contrast media was frightening and we heard that even Ringer's solution can cause reactions. The farewell dinner was excellent - far too much good food as usual! Professor Mannaioni judged the best three scientific communications and Haas, Leschke and Rivera were awarded prizes. Our Russian hosts also gave prizes to Uvnäs (most popular), Ennis (most communicative), Forsythe (youngest scientific degree) and Mannaioni (bravest for having visited Moscow so often before the meeting). Anita had us singing to the tune of Midnight in Moscow and all 21 verses of our anthem were sung. The evening ended with dancing on the deck and it is rumored that some delegates didn't get to bed! Our thanks go to Igor and his team for organizing the scientific and social side of the meeting so well. The next meeting will be held in Antwerp, Belgium, 22-25 May 1996.

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