

Meeting Report 2000

The 29th meeting of the European Histamine Research Society was held in Nemi, near Rome in May 2000 at the kind invitation of Professor Bruno Mondovi of the University of Rome. This year there were 104 participants from most European countries, North and South America as well as Japan and China. The largest contingent came from our host country [17] with Germany [13] and the UK [11] having the next largest delegations. Some of the regular EHRS attendees who were unable to attend this year's meeting were missed but a big welcome was given to all the new visitors, who we hope will return to future meetings. The conference itself took place at Nemi, a picturesque town 29 Km south east of Rome. Nemi is one of the small villages known as the 'Roman Castles' on the hills near Rome. As most of the delegates arrived by air, the organisers had arranged for coaches to take them from Rome airport to the three hotels in Nemi. Both at the airport and on the coaches, there was a lot of greeting of old friends and acquaintances and exchanging of all the news while the coaches negotiated the Rome traffic and road works to Nemi.

The conference was held in the Diane Park Hotel, in the town of Genzano, which is situated besides the Nemi Lake. This lake is of volcanic origin and famous for the Temple of the Roman Goddess, Diana and for two Roman ships built by the Emperor Caligula. In 1933 these were recovered from the bottom of the lake but tragically destroyed by fire a few years later. Most of the delegates were housed at this hotel but for the rest of us, there was an efficient coach shuttle service to the other two hotels.

Traditionally the start of this society's meetings is the informal Get Together Party on the Wednesday evening. Those people involved with the National Secretaries Meeting were a little late in arriving at this party. They found it in full swing with lots of beautifully presented food and plenty of Italian wine as well as our own special pianists – Roman Khanferyan from Russia. What a way to start a meeting!

This was the first year that this society has a president, Professor Madeleine Ennis and she gave us a welcoming address telling everyone what had happened on that day in other years before handing over to our host, Professor Bruno Mondovi. We were also welcomed by the Mayor of Nemi, Dr Biuggi, who told us about the history of Nemi before wishing every success to the meeting. This was then followed by a very special event, the presentation of Honorary Membership of the EHRS to Professor Franc Erjavec and Professor Jack Green. Then there was the Conference Lecture, which was given by Professor Takehiko Watanabe of Tohoku University, Japan. Professor Watanabe gave a fascinating lecture on 'Histidine decarboxylase: from purification to gene knockout'. Then the first of the 7 sessions commenced and we spent the rest of the morning hearing about mast cells, basophils and nitric oxide. After lunch we were treated to a half-day sightseeing trip of the Castelli Romani region. We visited the charming town of Grottaferrata with its famous Abbey, founded in the 11th century by Greek monks and erected on Roman ruins. Then we were taken to the Villa Aldobrandini at Frascati. Because of the pleasant climate in this region, various popes have resided in their summer palace at Castelli Gandolfo. We walked around the gardens and marvelled at the stunning views from this wonderful palace before returning to the conference centre for dinner.

Friday began with the annual G.B. West Lecture which was given this year by Professor Wilfred Lorenz of Marburg University, Germany. The lecture was entitled 'Paradigms in histamine research: many controversies – many solutions' and gave us a lot to think about. This was followed

by Laura Morpurgo of the CNR Centre of Molecular Biology at Rome who talked about the structure and function of copper-containing amine oxidases. This started the second session of communications which was on Amine Oxidases – a new area to the EHRS. After lunch it was the turn of the Central Nervous System scientists to communicate their work. Throughout the day, posters on amine oxidases, central nervous system and receptors had been displayed and were then formally discussed.

In next to no time Saturday arrived and the society's honorary photographer, Emanuela Masini of Florence University gave an interesting lecture on 'Autocoids modulation of ischemic-reperfusion injury'. This was followed by an oral communication session on Histamine Receptors. The G.B. West Memorial Trust, which is based at the University of East London, organise an annual essay competition for predoctoral students and the winner has to communicate their essay to an international meeting of their choice. The 1999 winner of this competition was Carlos Fitzsimons of Buenos Aires University and he very eloquently delivered his essay on the involvement of the histamine H₂ receptor number on the regulation of histamine-mediated cell growth. This was very well received. The seventh and final session on clinical studies was given, followed by more formal poster discussion sessions. Over the 3 days the conference took place, there were in all 4 special lectures plus 33 oral communications as well as many poster presentations. However, several people did manage to get a little sightseeing of Rome into their timetables!

Our General Assembly was very important this year as the new statutes, which had been previously circulated, were accepted and four Council Members were elected. They were Fred Pearce (London), Patrizio Blandini (Florence), Eddy Neugebauer (Köln) and Agnieszka Fogel (Lodz). Also we were given information about the next meeting in Turku, Finland. Then to our traditional Farewell Dinner with its wonderful Italian food and plenty of wine plus an Anniversary Cake, complete with fireworks! Madeleine Ennis presented the poster prize; first prize going to Sasse et al. (Germany), second prize to Tanaka and Ichikawa (Japan) and third prize to Raithel et al. (Germany) with 4 more posters being commended for their high standard. She also presented commemorative medals to the National Secretaries in honour of their hard work for the society. The evening would not be complete without some sort of singing – our anthem and Anita Sydbom had written one based on Arrivederci Roma. Everyone agreed that this had been a very successful and enjoyable meeting with excellent organisation. Our thanks were given to Bruno Mondovi and his team. The next meeting will be held in Turku, Finland, May 9-13, 2001 at the kind invitation of Professor Pertti Panula.

Gill Sturman