

## Meeting Report 2003

The 32<sup>nd</sup> meeting of the European Histamine Research Society was at the kind invitation of Professors Henk Timmerman and Rob Leurs of the Leiden/Amsterdam Centre for Drug Research Leiden University/Vrije University Amsterdam. This meeting was held between May 7<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup>, 2003 at Noorwijkerhout which is situated on the North Sea Coast a few kilometres SW of Amsterdam. Many beautiful bulb fields surrounded the hotel/conference centre. This year there were 178 participants representing 27 countries (most from European countries but also from North and South America, Japan and Iran). The participants ranged from nearly one to almost 90 years of age! Some of the regular EHRS attendees could not be there and they were missed but a big welcome was given to all the new visitors, who we hope will return to future meetings.

Unlike most previous meetings, the opening and welcome speeches by Professor Henk Timmerman and Professor Madeleine Ennis, our president, for our meeting started on early Wednesday evening. Histamine research was compared to tulips – flourishing with many varieties and different colours/aspects. Travel Bursary certificates and cheques (each of €500) were then distributed to seven of our student members. Diamond Congress Ltd., Novo Nordisk and our society had sponsored these bursaries and we thank them for this. This was followed by a very special event, the presentation of Honorary Membership of the EHRS to Professor Wolfgang Schmutzler. It was noted that he had attended 27 of our 28 meetings. Professor Pertti Panula of Turku University, Finland then gave the opening lecture which was entitled 'Histamine and histamine receptors in CNS disorders'. The rest of the evening was filled with greeting of old and acquaintances and exchanging, together with welcoming the new delegates.

The next day started early with a plenary lecture by Professor Walter Schunack from Berlin entitled 'Histamine H<sub>1</sub>- and H<sub>2</sub>-receptor subtypes; targets for drug development' and he spoke about the European cooperation of research occurring in these areas. Then there were 3 symposia – molecular aspects of the histamine H<sub>3</sub> receptors, medicinal chemistry of histamine ligands and the therapeutic potential of the histamine H<sub>3</sub> receptor ligands. Early that evening we had a short drive to the Keukenhof, which is beautiful park packed with masses of spring bulbs, especially tulips of all shapes and colours. Besides wandering through the gardens, we were also able to see splendid orchids and other tropical plants in bloom.

Friday began with the annual G.B. West Lecture which was given this year by Professor Stephen Holgate of the UK. He talked about the role of chronic inflammation and remodelling in the pathogenesis of persistent asthma and spoke about the complex interplay between inflammation and genetics which can lead to chronic asthma. At the end of his lecture, he was presented with the G.B. West autobiography, a certificate and present from The Netherlands. Then there were more symposia – mediators in allergy and inflammation and the histamine H<sub>4</sub> receptor: its role in allergy and inflammation. After lunch, our excursion went via Den Haag and the outskirts of Rotterdam to the Waterlands and Delta Works. Here we were shown a massive storm surge barrier and a film of its construction. Then we were taken to Veele, a very picturesque village with fortified harbour and huge church before having our evening meal at a restaurant in Kamperland. It was here we were able to sing our anthem and song that Anita Sydbom had composed about the meeting before returning late and very tired to our hotel.

For the start of the final day, Professor Lindsay Hough of USA gave a plenary lecture entitled 'Pain perception and the histaminergic system'. Then we listened to the final 3 symposia – histamine and CNS function, molecular aspects of histamine H<sub>1</sub> receptors and histamine and its role in pathophysiology. Throughout the meeting, nearly a hundred posters were on display and the poster-judging panel had a difficult job in deciding the best ones. Eventually they awarded first prize to Cannon et al. (Albany, USA), second prize to Stemplj et al. (Ljubljana, Slovenia) and third prize to Dee et al. (Amsterdam, The Netherlands), two more posters were highly commended – Wulff et al (Denmark) and Faghieh et al. (USA).

New to this year's meeting was the introduction of the Young Investigator Award, which was sponsored by Abbott Laboratories. These awards were for pre-doctoral students and post-doctoral trainees with no more than 3 years research training. Competitors had to submit a manuscript of their work several weeks prior to the meeting and these were peer reviewed. A total of five finalists had to give a 10-minute oral presentation which was then discussed. The winner (Bakker of Amsterdam) and runner-up (Lozada of Turku, Finland) received 500 and 200 euros respectively. All the finalists received a certificate and a present.

To end the formal part of our meeting, there was the General Assembly. After a ballot, four new Council Members were elected (Andras Falus of Hungary, Tatjana Irman-Florjanc of Slovenia, Pertti Panula of Finland and Anita Sydbom of Sweden) and our President, Madeleine Ennis was re-elected. Madeleine Ennis then presented Wolfgang Schmutzler, Fred Pearce, Agnieszka Fogel and Eddie Neugebauer each with a small gift in recognition of and thanks for their hard work for the society. Our meeting ended with its traditional Farewell Dinner – this year having a special Indonesian flavour.

Everyone agreed that this had been a scientifically exciting meeting with excellent organisation. Thanks were given to Henk Timmerman, Rob Leurs and their team. The next meeting will be held in Germany, near Köln between April 29<sup>th</sup> - May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2004) at the kind invitation of Professor Helmut Haas.