

Meeting Report 2004

The 33rd meeting of the European Histamine Research Society was at the kind invitation of Professor Helmut Haas of the Heinrich-Heine-University of Dusseldorf, Germany. This meeting was held from April 28th - May 2nd, 2004 at the Kardinal Schulte Haus, which was between Dusseldorf and Cologne. Our meeting was held in a large building which was built in the late 1920s as a seminary for the Archbishop of Cologne. It was surrounded by woods and parkland with meadows full of flowers, at the top of a hill overlooking the Rhine valley with Cologne in the distance. This year there were approximately 140 participants representing 25 countries (most from European countries but also from North and South America, China and Japan). 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.

As last year, the opening and welcome speeches by Professor Helmut Haas, Professor Schrader, the Rector of the Heinrich-Heine-University and Professor Madeleine Ennis, our President, started early Wednesday evening. Travel Bursary certificates and cheques (each of €500) were then distributed to ten of our student members. Novo Nordisk, UCB and our society had sponsored these bursaries and we thank them for this. Then we listened to the opening lecture by Professor Lin of Lyon, France who described the involvement of histamine and orexins on the regulation of the sleep/wake cycle. After this we had our usual "Get-Together Party" where there was much greeting of old and new friends and exchanging of news.

This year's meeting included 3 symposia which were in memory of three very eminent histaminologists who have played important roles in our society – Czeslaw Maslinski of Poland, Börje Uvnäs of Sweden and Hiroshi Wada of Japan.

The next day started early with a plenary lecture by Professor Cory Teucher of Burlington, USA entitled 'Histamine receptors and susceptibility to central nervous system autoimmune disease' and he talked about genetic and immune aspects of histamine research. Then there was the first symposium in honour of Czeslaw Maslinski a founder member of our society and one of our Honorary Members. The rest of the day was spent listening to other oral presentations on H₃ antagonists, the CNS and clinical implications as well as various poster discussions. Before our evening meal we were invited into the little chapel in the quadrangle of the Kardinal Schulte Haus to listen to an organ recital given by the organist Gast. The recital contained music by Bach, Pachelbel, Locillet, Schnizer and Dubois. As the chapel organ was of eighteen-century style (but with electrically driven bellows), it was a wonderful experience listening to these works.

Friday began with the annual G.B.West Lecture which was given this year by Professor Piero Mannaioni of Florence, Italy. He talked about the riddle of the mast cell receptors in the immune system. Then there was the second symposium in honour of Börje Uvnäs of Sweden, also an Honorary Member of the society, where Anita Sydbom described his love of life and research, in particular the mast cell. After a coffee break we listened to the four finalists give their presentations for 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 four finalists had to give a 10-minute oral presentation which was then discussed. The winner (T. Ishizuka (Osaka, Japan)) and runner-up (F. Shenton (Durham, UK))

received a cash prize. A special commendation was awarded to S. Mätzler and A. Sponring (both of Innsbruck, Austria). All the finalists received a certificate and a present. After more poster discussions, we were taken by coach to the nearby Neanderthal Park and Museum. We were able to walk in the park and some of our members were even able to sleep on the stone benches! In the museum, which spiralled up through the ages of man, we were able to listen to more information about man's evolution. Then were taken to marvel at the Müngstener Brücke, an iron railway bridge opened in 1897 before having a medieval banquet at Schloss Burg which is a castle perched above the Wupper River. One of our society members even dressed up in medieval clothes. A truly marvellous but exhausting time was had by all.

For the start of the final day, Professor Rob Leurs of The Netherlands gave a plenary lecture entitled "How to bind and activate H₁ receptors". Then we listened to more oral presentations before having the final symposium of the meeting in honour of Hiroshi Wada. Throughout this 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 Schlegel et al (Dusseldorf and Frankfurt, Germany), second prize to Medina et al (Buenos Aires, Argentina) and third prize to Klocker et al. (Innsbruck, Austria) with a highly commended award going to Gillard et al (UCB, Belgium).

To end the formal part of our meeting, there was the General Assembly. In addition to the usual business, there was the unanimous acceptance for 3 of our members to become Honorary Members at our meeting next May and they were Professor Mannaioni of Florence, Italy, Professors Lorenz of Marburg, Germany and Professor Wananabe of Sendai, Japan. Our meeting ended with its traditional Farewell Dinner whilst we listened to a marvellous jazz band. As usual we had our singing session – 'Clementine' to new words composed by Anita Sydbom thanking our German hosts for an excellent meeting and then our EHRB anthem.

Everyone agreed that this had been a scientifically exciting meeting with excellent organisation. Thanks were given to Helmut Haas and his team, especially Oliver Selbach. The next meeting will be held in Slovenia, at Bled (May 11th – 14th, 2005) at the kind invitation of the Slovenian histaminologists.