

Meeting Report 2006

The 35th meeting of the European Histamine Research Society was at the kind invitation of Dr Ekaterini (Katherine) Tiligada and the Greek pharmacologists of the Medical School of the University of Athens. This meeting was held from May 10th -13th, 2006 at Delphi. Delphi is a two hour drive west of Athens and is located in the mountainous area of central Greece on the slopes of Mount Parnassos. The views from Delphi were spectacular as one looked down to the Corinthian Gulf. Delphi, according to Greek mythology, is the centre or navel of the world, is mentioned in Homer's Iliad and was the most important centre of worship in ancient Greece. This year there were 150 participants representing 22 countries (from most European countries as well as USA, Mexico, Argentina and Japan). The largest contingents were from Hungary, Germany, UK and USA. 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.

This year the meeting started informally on the Wednesday evening after registration with a "Welcome Reception" in the Delphi Palace Hotel. There was much greeting of old and new friends and exchanging of news during the rest of the evening.

The following morning started with the Opening Ceremony where we were formally welcomed by the Major of Delphi (P. Kalsis) and then Professor Christina Syrak, Director of the laboratories of the Medical School of the University of Athens. Additionally there were messages of welcome from other Greek dignitaries. Then our president, Professor Madeleine Ennis officially welcomed us all to the meeting before distributing the Travel Bursary certificates and cheques (each of €500) to ten of our student members. Novo Nordisk, UCB S.A. Pharma Sector, Johnson & Johnson, Roche had sponsored these bursaries and we thank them for this. Presentation to Mrs Ingrid Olhagen-Uvnäs of the Honorary Membership was then given with Dr Anita Sydbom giving the oration. Ingrid has always been very supportive to our society and she was presented with a certificate beautifully written in Latin and sporting the society's seal. Then there was an invited lecture which was given by our president, Professor Madeleine Ennis of Belfast, UK entitled 'Histamine and the EHRS - what has happened in the last 35 years?' After this the first symposia of the meeting took place. This was on the future perspectives in histamine research. Then followed 4 poster sessions: on the H3 receptor, Mast Cells and Basophils, Histamine in the CNS and Histamine in the GI tract as well as an oral session on Allergy and Inflammation. After lunch we went by coach to archaeological excavations in Delphi. Initially we were guided through the museum which contains antiquities from the site, including the navel of the world, before walking through the actual ruined site where we learnt much more about its history. Then we were taken by coach to a nearby monastery where we were able to appreciate the tranquillity and beauty of the area as well as sampling Metaxa. After this we descended via a series of nerve-racking hairpin bends and through very old and famous olive groves to the coast. Here at the fishing village of Itea, we had our evening meal in a local restaurant.

Friday began with the annual G.B. West Lecture which was given this year by Professor Andras Falus from Budapest and the lecture was entitled "Histamine and systems biology; genes and genomics beyond the genes". Then there were oral sessions on "Metabolism, reproduction and cancer" and "Histamine and the brain". After a coffee break there were more poster discussions on the "Clinical aspects of histamine research", and "Histamine in reproduction and cancer". At the end

of the morning we listened to the finalists give their presentations for the Arthur A. Hancock 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. There were a total of five finalists and they had to give a 10-minute oral presentation which was then discussed. The winner (*Alexei Ponomarenko* (Dusseldorf, Germany) and runner-up (*Richard van Rijn* (Amsterdam, The Netherlands) received a cash prize. Special highly commended certificates were awarded to the other finalists - *Robert Kiss* (Budapest, Hungary), *Herman Lim* (Amsterdam, The Netherlands) and *Kristina Hegyl* (Budapest, Hungary). After lunch, the Art Hancock Memorial Symposium was held and Tim Esbenshade introduced this symposium by talking about Art: the man, his achievements and his life at the EHRS. The final sessions of the day were the posters on "Immunology" and "Receptors and other subjects". For our dinner that evening we went to the Piano Bar in the Hotel Inikos and our hosts lead the Greek dancing with many histaminologists joining in. This was greatly enjoyed by everyone with many photos being taken and much wine consumed.

At the start of the final day, a lecture entitled "Occupational asthma: Diagnosis and management" was given by Piero Maestrelli from Italy. Then there was the D.Varonos Memorial Symposium on "Clinical Implications – histamine and disease" where we listened to presentations on rheumatoid arthritis, chronic idiopathic urticaria and the involvement of histamine in various other immunological conditions. This was followed by a session on the neuro-immuno-endocrine aspects of histamine. After lunch, the final symposium of the meeting was the EUBREN Basophil network symposium. It was the first time for this joint venture and it proved to be very successful.

Throughout this meeting, nearly 50 posters were on display and the poster-judging panel had a difficult job in deciding the best ones. Eventually they awarded first prize to Chiara Mariotti et al. of Florence, Italy, second prize to Mariusz Gujski et al., Warsaw, Poland and third prize to Colm Collins et al of Dublin, Ireland with a highly commended award going to Peter Pocza et al. (Budapest, Hungary) and Jerzy Jochem et al. (Kabrze, Poland and Ljubljana, Slovenia).

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 Robin Ganellin, Henk Timmerman and Walter Schunack to become Honorary Members at our meeting next May. They have been loyal supporters of the society over many, many years and been supplying us with carious interesting histamine agonists and antagonists to help us with our own research. Also a new Council (Paul Chazot, Friedhelm Diel, Bernie Gibbs, and Katherine Tiligada) and President, Anita Sydbom, were elected. The outgoing President, Madeleine Ennis, thanked her previous Council members for their hard work and also the society for its support during her tenure of office.

Our meeting ended with its traditional Farewell Dinner at the "Villa Symposium" in Delphi. During the dinner, the widow of Art Hancock and her son Jeff distributed the prizes. Kathryn Hancock doubled the value of the prizes this year, which was much appreciated by the Society and especially the winners. We then saw traditional Greek folk dances which audience participation was encouraged. As usual we had our singing session – this year Anita Sydbom had put new works to "My Bonnie lies over the ocean" thanking our Greek hosts for an excellent meeting as well as 'outgoing' president for all her hard work for the society. Then we sung our EHRS anthem.

Everyone agreed that this had been an excellent scientific meeting with superb organisation and location. Thanks were given to the Greek pharmacologists. The next meeting will be held near Florence, Italy (May 9th – 12th, 2007) at the kind invitation of Professor Emanuela Masini and members of the department of Preclinical and Clinical Pharmacology.

Gill Sturman