

Meeting Report 2008

The 37th meeting of the European Histamine Research Society was at the kind invitation of our president, Dr Anita Sydbom and Professor Sven-Erik Dahlén, from the Centre for Allergy Research at the Karolinska Institutet, Stockholm, Sweden. This meeting was held, May 7th – 10th, 2008 in Stockholm. This was the second time that our society has held its meeting in Stockholm; the previous meeting in 1979 was held on a boat! This year there were about 110 participants (10 of whom were accompanying persons) registered, representing 22 countries (most from European countries but also from North and South America and Japan). The largest contingents, besides the Swedes, were from the UK, Hungary, Germany and Slovenia. Some of the regulars 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 was held in the Skogshem & Wijk Conference Centre on Lidingö; which is one of the 14 islands making up Stockholm. Stockholm was seen at its very best as the weather was excellent. The meeting started on the Wednesday with registration and the meeting of the EHRS Council. After this there was a Welcome party while we greeted old and new friends and exchanged news during the rest of the evening.

On Thursday morning, there was the Opening Session where we were formally welcomed by Professor Sven-Erik Dahlén. Then our president, Anita Sydbom officially welcomed us to all the meeting before distributing the Travel Bursary certificates (each of €500) to 14 of our student members. Novo Nordisk, UCB S.A., Johnson & Johnson, Glaxo, Roche as well as the G.B. West Memorial Trust had sponsored these bursaries and we thank them for this. The meeting started with a plenary lecture entitled 'Post-consolidation therapy with histamine dihydrochloride and interleukin-2 in acute myelogenous leukaemia' was given by Kristoffer Hellstrand of Gothenburg, Sweden and introduced by Gunnar Nilsson of the Karolinska Institutet, Sweden. After this were two symposia on Histamine and Neurobiology. This was followed by a photo of all participants taken on the terrace. After lunch, Sven-Erik Dahlén gave a lecture on prostaglandin D₂: mediator of inflammation and sleep, as well as sensitive marker of mast cell activation. This was followed by an oral session on the recently discovered H4 receptor and then four poster sessions. During the evening dinner, the Academic Folk Dance Society of Stockholm in national costumes performed a number of Swedish country dances as well as persuading many of the society to join with them. Then we listened to three people (Karin Rensberg Rihpa, Eva Teillus Renfelt and Krister Stoor) in national dress representing the Sami, the indigenous people who live in the north of Sweden, Norway, Finland and the Kola Peninsular of Russia. They talked about their lives, cultures, history and traditions as well as some of their arts and crafts. Then some yoiking, a very old form of singing was demonstrated. We listened and then had a go at participating!

Friday began with the G.B. West lecture which was introduced by Sven-Erik Dahlén and given by John Bienenstock of McMaster University, Canada. The lecture was entitled 'Mast cells, nerves and IgE'. John spoke about the cross talk which is continually occurring between mast cells and nerves. At the end of the lecture, John was given a present and a copy of G.B. West's autobiography. Then there was a mast cells symposium before more poster discussions. The morning finished with an oral session on mast cells and histamine release. Then we walked along the shore to our boat. Whilst we sailed past many islands making up the Stockholm Archipelago we ate our lunch. At the

island of Djurgården, we visited the Vasa museum where we saw the remarkable restoration of the magnificent Vasa warship. This warship had sunk in Stockholm harbour over 300 years previously. Then we took a ferry to the island of Gamla Stan where we walked through the narrow medieval streets of the Old Town. Our guides told us about the various sites including the majestic Royal Palace and the City Hall. Our tours finished at the Nobel Museum where we learnt about the great scientists and poets who have been laureates in the past. After our evening meal in this museum, we were able to wander round the Old Town enjoying the city's rich history and beauty before driving back to our Conference Centre.

At the start of the final day, a plenary lecture entitled 'The vertebrate brain histaminergic system: a multifaceted modulatory network' was given by Pertti Panula of Finland and he was introduced by Rob Leurs of The Netherlands. This was followed by a 'Histamine Potpourri' oral session. After the coffee break, we listened to five finalists give their presentations for the Art A. Hancock Young Investigator Award, which was sponsored by Abbott Laboratories and Art's widow Kathryn Hancock. These awards are 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 (Rajkumar Noubade of University of Vermont, Burlington, USA) and the runner-up (Zoltan Wiener of Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Budapest, Hungary) each received a cash prize. A special commendation was awarded to Kamonchanok Sansuk (Amsterdam, The Netherlands), Agnes Koncz (Budapest, Hungary) and Kristoffer Sahlholm (Stockholm, Sweden). All these finalists received a certificate and either a monetary prize or a present. Then the final symposium entitled 'Histamine – The Future' took place. This was followed by Sven-Erik Dahlén from the Karolinska Institutet, Stockholm telling us about IMI – a new opportunity for research funding in Europe. Throughout this meeting, nearly 40 posters were on display and the poster-judging panel had a difficult job in deciding the best ones. Eventually they awarded first prize to Kristine Rossbach et al. of Germany, second prize to Eiichi Sakurai et al. of Japan and third prize to Katarina Černe et al. of Slovenia. To end the formal part of our meeting, there was the General Assembly.

Our meeting ended with its traditional Farewell Dinner followed by our award ceremony. Then as usual we had our singing session. However as Anita Sydbom was the hostess this year the 'Thank You' song was 'composed' by Pauling Haines, with a little help from Madeleine and Gill. The new words thanking our Swedish hosts, especially Anita, for an excellent meeting were put to the tune of 'Oh Tannebaum'. Then finally we sung our EHRS anthem.

Everyone agreed that this had been a marvellous scientific meeting with superb organisation, excellent lectures and presentations with stimulating and friendly discussions. Thanks were given to the Swedish pharmacologists. The next meeting will be held in Fulda, Germany (May 13th – 16th, 2009) at the kind invitation of Professor Friedhelm Diel, Institut für Umwelt und Gesundheit (IUG) and the University of Applied Sciences, Fulda, Germany.

Gill Sturman