

Meeting Report 2010

The 39th meeting of the European Histamine Research Society was planned for 21st-24th April, 2010 but had to be postponed due to the clouds of volcanic ash from Iceland stopping all flights. Fortunately the meeting was able to be rescheduled for July (14th – 16th). This was the third meeting of the EHRS to be held in England; the previous meetings were held in London (1977) and Brighton (1983) and both organised by Geoff West, one of our late Honorary Members. Another difference to this meeting was that it was the first meeting to be associated with COST Action BM0806. Despite this EHRS meeting being 3 months later than originally planned, there were 110 EHRS participants who journeyed to the north-east of England and they came from most European countries as well as the United States, Argentina, Japan and Israel. Unfortunately a number of the regular 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's meeting was held in Hatfield College of the University of Durham in Durham City. This college is situated right in the centre of this very historic city which is dominated by the cathedral and castle. Durham University was Britain's third university and was founded in 1832 with Hatfield College being the second college established.

The actual EHRS meeting started on Tuesday evening with a Welcome Party where everyone greeted old friends and made new ones as well as exchanging news. Just prior to the Welcome Party, a COST Public lecture given by Professor Jean-Charles Schwartz had been delivered. He spoke about histamine as a neurotransmitter of the brain and its potential therapeutic exploitation but dedicated the lecture to the memory of Sir James Black who had died earlier this year. Also there was a meeting of the EHRS Council.

On the Wednesday morning, there was the Opening Session where we were formally welcomed by Paul Chazot, our host and Anita Sydbom, our president. Paul told us about Durham City and the University. He also explained that this year there would be young scientists co-chairing the oral sessions so that they would get some experience in chairing meetings. Then our president, Anita distributed the Travel Bursary certificates and cheques (each for €500) to three student members. Pfizer sponsored two bursaries while the other was from the G.B. West Memorial Trust. Then Anita introduced the speaker for this year's G.B. West Lecture who was Jean-Charles Schwartz with a lecture entitled 'Clinical applications for pitolisant (BF2.649), inverse agonist at the H₃ receptor' and he discussed the potential use for this compound in narcolepsy and other sleep disorders as well as a cognitive enhancer. Then for the rest of the morning we listened to oral presentations on the Histamine H₄ receptor. After lunch we had the first plenary lecture which was given by Patrizio Blandina (Italy) entitled 'Functional implications of Histaminergic Neurons Heterogeneity'. The next oral session was in memory of one of our dear regular members, El-Sayed Assem, and was on General Histamine. This was then followed by a poster session where there was much discussion of the scientific work being presented. For our evening meal, we were taken by coach to Lumley Castle for a Medieval Banquet. Both Paul, our host and Anita, our president were dressed in medieval clothes as well as all the staff at the castle. We were entertained as well as taught how to eat a huge meal without knives, forks and spoons! Much fun was had by all.

The following day (Thursday) started with the second plenary lecture which was given by Nick Carruthers of Johnson & Johnson (US) on 'The translational approaches towards the identification of a histaminergic H₃ receptor antagonist and its' clinical evaluation for the

symptomatic treatments of allergic rhinitis'. After this there were two oral sessions; the first on Histamine in the Brain and the next on H₃ receptors in the periphery. The final items for the morning were two plenary lectures. The first should have been given by Jorge Brioni of Abbott (US) but he was not able to attend this rescheduled meeting and so his lecture was given by his colleague, Marlon Cowart who was also scheduled to give the second plenary lecture. Therefore the lecture(s) were on 'Histamine H₃ antagonists design, properties and efficacy in CNS models'. After lunch we had a coach excursion to Beamish, which is an open air museum set in over 300 acres of beautiful countryside. Its principle is to preserve an example of everyday life in the north-east of England in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. We walked, rode on trams, visited shops, houses and farms as well as seeing a colliery and pit cottages. It is a very good example of social history. Sadly one of our members fell on the coach and was X-rayed to check that there was nothing broken – fortunately she was just badly bruised. After dinner back at Durham, we were entertained by a group of four Northumberland pipers.

Friday started with the fourth and last plenary lecture which was given by Steve Liu of Pfizer (UK). His lecture was entitled 'Histamine H₃ and H₄ receptors – therapeutic opportunities in airway and inflammatory diseases'. Then there were three oral presentations from the finalists of the EHRS Young Investigator Award. The winner was Christelle Anaclet (INSERM, France) with Saara Nuutinen of Helsinki University, Finland the runner up and Natasha Lethbridge of Durham University, UK third. They all received a cash prize. After coffee break there was the second session on histamine in the brain and this was followed by a medicinal chemistry session which also continued after our lunch. Throughout this meeting the 27 poster presentations were on display and there was much discussion around them. The post-judging panel had a difficult job in deciding the best ones. Ultimately they awarded first prize to Tommas Elender et al (UK), second prize to Linda Kay et al (UK) and third prize to Roland Geyer et al (Germany). At the end of this afternoon we held our General Assembly and the main discussion here centred round the publication of our proceedings. Instead of producing short papers as in the past, we will publish all communications as abstracts. These will be peer reviewed as were the short papers. Our meeting ended with its traditional Farewell Dinner followed by our award ceremony and also Madeleine Ennis gave a tribute to El-Sayed Assem. Then there was the music from 'Minus Zero', as well as our singing session, beginning with "Anita's Thank You Song" (sung to the tune of "For he's a jolly good fellow") as a thank you to Paul and his team for the excellent meeting and then we sung our EHRS Anthem.

Everyone agreed that this had been a marvellous scientific meeting with superb organisation especially as it had to be rescheduled at relatively short notice. All the presentations and lectures stimulated a lot of good discussions. The next meeting will be held in Sochi, Russia (May 11-14, 2011) at the kind invitation of Roman Khanferyan of Kuban State Medical University, Krasnodar, Russia.

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