

Meeting Report of the European Histamine Research Society

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This year's meeting was in Lodz, Poland at the kind invitation of Agnieszka Fogel. This is the fourth time that histaminologists have met in Lodz; the previous meetings were in 1978 and 1998 as well as hosting the very first informal meeting of the 'Histamine Club' in 1971. This year's meeting was held in the Ambassador Centrum Hotel which is situated in the centre of the city of Lodz, close to shopping malls and leisure centres. The world famous Piotrkowska Street with its numerous pubs and restaurants was only five minutes walking distance away but there was virtually no time to explore these places as the meeting was packed full of interesting communications.

This year there were 88 people registered and they represented 23 countries (mostly from Europe but also from the USA, South America, Japan as well as some other Eastern countries). Some regular attendees could not attend and they were missed but a big welcome was made to all the new visitors, who we hope will return to future meetings. Most of the delegates arrived on the Wednesday. The Council met as usual late afternoon. During this meeting we heard that the luggage of one of the delegates had been left by mistake at Warsaw airport and the airport was about to be evacuated thinking it may be a bomb. Fortunately the case was collected by its owner and the panic was over! Then there was the Welcome Reception which was different in that it was a set meal with everyone seated. However, it did not stop old friends being greeted and new ones made.

Thursday started with the Opening Ceremony for the 42nd meeting of our society and we were welcomed by our hostess, Agnieszka Fogel and the Dean of the Medical Faculty on behalf of the Medical University of Lodz. To the delight of everyone and with the aid of technology, we were able to be 'joined up' by Skype with our president, Paul Chazot who thanked Anita Sydbom for stepping into 'his shoes' but he also told us that his recovery would take several months. After Anita had given us her welcoming talk the student bursaries were given out; certificates and cheques (€500 for each) to seven student members. The El-Sayed Assem family very kindly sponsored one student while the rest were from our society. Then there was the presentation of Honorary Membership to our hostess, Professor W. Agnieszka Fogel. Wilfred Lozenz, himself an Honorary Member, gave the laudation to Agnieszka who was then presented with a certificate beautifully written in Latin and sporting the society's official seal. Then there was the first of the invited lectures given by Pertti Panula (Finland) and introduced by Beatrice Passani (Italy). The lecture was entitled 'Histamine and Addiction: From behaviour to neurotransmitter interactions'. After this very interesting lecture, there was coffee break which gave us time to start looking at the posters which were displayed around the lecture room. When we commenced again, we had more communications on the role of histamine in the CNS. Some of these were very short oral presentations highlighting key aspects of the various posters displayed. Then this session ended with us listening to some piano music composed by the famous female Lodz composer, Grazyna Bacewicz.

After lunch, we then left Lodz on two coaches who drove us south. We were driven through the flat arable countryside to Jasna Gora where there is the famous Pauline Monastery containing the Shrine of Our Lady of Czestochowa. Every year, millions of pilgrims visit this shrine to the Virgin Mary to see the famous Black Madonna painting. We were taken round the monastery by excellent guides who told us the history of the area, pointed out various important features and treasures of the monastery. We were able to see the 'Black Madonna' icon which is a unique example of a combination of Byzantine art of the East with the Latin culture of the West. Then back on the coaches to the Gold Inn at Kruszow where we were given a typical Polish dinner.

The following day started with the second session on 'Histamine in the CNS' and the first lecture was given by Bill Wisden of Imperial College London on the pivotal role histamine plays in the sleep-wake cycle. This was followed by oral and then poster presentations. 'Histamine receptors' session then started with an invited lecture from Armin Buschauer, (Germany) on the various approaches undertaken to produce compounds with selective activity for the histamine H₂ and H₄ receptors. This was followed by a number of communications all related to the development of compounds with various activities at the different histamine receptors. The final presentation before lunch was given by Rob Leurs, (The Netherlands) who talked about their discovery process for histamine H₄ receptor compounds emphasising that a better understanding can be achieved by using good models and small fragments of compounds. After lunch, this 'Histamine and receptors' session continued with ten presentations but the emphasis this time was on pharmacological and biochemical effects. A session entitled Histamine and Cancer was given after the mid-afternoon break where we listened to 8 presentations on the involvement of histamine in cancer and how the histamine H₄ receptor has been shown to suppress a number of cancer cell lines and modified various gene expressions.

In the evening we were taken by coach to the Grand Theatre in Lodz to see the ballet 'Promised Land'. This was a story of three ambitious men searching for their dreams of prosperity by starting a modern textile factory together and it was full of emotional extremes -a Dickensian tale of greed, exploitation, and betrayal. In 1973 it was made into a film, directed by Andrzej Wajda, which was nominated for an Oscar for Best Foreign Film. The music was composed by Gray Veredon, Franz von Suppe and Michael Nyman.

Saturday started with the G.B.West lecture which was given by Satoshi Tanaka from Okayama University, Japan and he was introduced by Agnieszka Fogel. He spoke about histamine synthesis and its functions in murine mast cells. After this very interesting lecture, Satoshi was presented with a copy of G.B.West's autobiography. This was followed by a session entitled 'Histamine and Cells' which centred on allergic conditions, mast cells and basophils. During this session, the final invited lecture was given by Marek Jutel of Wroclaw, Poland on 'the role of histamine signalling in pathomechanism on non-specific IBD' and he was introduced by Madeleine Ennis who reminded us that that Marek besides being a very good scientist was also a good singer and dancer as we found out at the Sochi meeting in 2011. Then there were 9 more presentations including one where zebra fish were used as a model and when asked why they were used, the answer was that they are cheaper than zebras! Immediately after our lunch we listened to a couple of presentations about 2 internet databases for the histamine H₄ receptor initiated from the COST Action BM0806 which have been set up. These are invaluable to anyone researching the histamine H₄ receptor field.

Throughout the meeting the poster committee had been working very hard and as usual had a difficult task in identifying winning posters for the poster competition. Eventually first prize was given to L. Kay *et al.*, from Sheffield, UK with her poster entitled 'Preliminary characterization of histamine receptor expression in human lung mast cells, second to Y.Zhao *et al.*, from Lyon, France with her poster entitled 'Histaminergic tuberomamillary nucleus constitutes one of the most important targets for the wake-promoting effect of orexin neurons but not the exclusive one' and third prize went to M.Grosicki *et al.*, from Cracow, Poland with his poster entitled 'Eosinophil purification from peripheral blood – study of different immunomagnetic cell sorting methods efficiency'.

The final oral session of our meeting was to listen to our younger members (PhD students or not more than 3 year's post-doctoral research) give their presentations for the EHRS Young Investigator Award. It was another very difficult task for the judges in differentiating between these six excellent presentations. This year it was decided that there would be two joint winners: Maria Sundvik

(Helsinki, Finland) and Ling Shan (Amsterdam, The Netherlands). The other four young investigators - Anna Gianlorenco from Sao Carlos, Brazil, Przemysław Rzodkiewicz of Warsaw, Poland, Maki Michioki and Tomohiro Nakano both from Tokushima, Japan were all highly commended. Then we held our General Assembly. Many thanks were given to Anita for all her hard work in taking over Paul Chazot's Presidential role whilst he is ill and everyone wished Paul a speedy recovery. Our meeting ended with a traditional Polish Farewell Dinner followed by our award ceremony. The certificates and prizes were given out. Then as usual we had our singing session where we sung our EHRS Anthem before saying 'au revoir' to our many 'histaminergic' friends.

Our thanks are given to all of the Polish histaminologists for the excellent meeting. The next meeting will be held in Lyon, France (7-11 May, 2014) at the kind invitation of Jian-Sheng Lin.

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