

NEWS

Stroke – A Diagnostic and Therapeutic Challenge Zagreb, Croatia, October 27, 2001

On the occasion of celebration of its 40th anniversary, the Academy of Medical Sciences of Croatia organized the symposium entitled *Stroke – A Diagnostic and Therapeutic Challenge*. The Symposium was held on October 27, 2001, in the Main Hall of the Croatian Medical Association in Zagreb, and was attended by nearly 200 participants who filled up the hall to its capacity. The Symposium was chaired by Professor Vida Demarin.

Upon registration procedure, the audience were addressed by Professor B. Vitale, who expressed satisfaction with the active participation of numerous distinguished physicians who perform current diagnosis and treatment of stroke in Croatia at a high professional level.

The introductory lecture on the prospects in stroke management was given by Professor Vida Demarin, head of the University Department of Neurology, Sestre milosrdnice University Hospital from Zagreb. Professor Demarin emphasized the paramount importance of preventive activities in the prevention of stroke, this major health and socioeconomic problem, in line with international trends. During her lecture, she highlighted the need that, at the end of the Decade of Brain, stroke be defined as an emergency medical condition which can be successfully diagnosed by current neuroimaging techniques and efficaciously treated by novel therapeutic approaches. The need was also emphasized of organizing special wards for stroke patients, so-called stroke units, as it has been demonstrated that stroke mortality and disability are considerably reduced by treatment of these patients at such stroke units. Also, the sad fact was mentioned that stroke is the leading cause of death in Croatia.

The renowned lecturers presented new concepts and current approach in stroke prevention, from epidemiological data, risk factors for stroke, association of cardiac disease and cerebrovascular disorders, through novel neuro-

surgical methods of treatment, ultrasound and neuroimaging methods in the diagnosis of stroke, and therapy and acute management of stroke patients.

Assist. Professor Vesna Šerić delivered a lecture on the epidemiology of stroke, pointing to an epidemic of stroke to be expected in the future. Professor Željko Reiner presented the molecular basis for the development of atherosclerosis as a significant risk factor for stroke, and correlation between elevated lipid concentration and cerebrovascular disease. Dr. Boris Starčević spoke about the association of cardiac disease and stroke, emphasizing hypertension as the major risk factor for stroke. Professor Miljenko Kalousek provided a convenient survey of neuroradiologic methods in the diagnosis of stroke, underlining the role of recognition of early signs of ischemic stroke.

Dr. Arijana Lovrenčić-Huzjan, Ph.D., presented a lecture on the role of ultrasound methods in the diagnosis of stroke, emphasizing the great value of this noninvasive diagnostic method in the prevention and early diagnosis of stroke; recent data suggest the possible utility of ultrasound in improving therapeutic outcome in thrombolysis.

After the break, Head Doctor Vesna Vargek-Solter presented the present possibilities in stroke therapy, with special reference to the role of thrombolytic therapy in ischemic stroke by use of recombinant tissue plasminogen, anticipated to become available soon in Croatia.

Professor Tomislav Šoša spoke about surgical methods in the treatment of extracranial segments of cerebral vessels, and about the role of vascular surgery in the prevention and therapy of stroke.

Towards the end of the meeting, Assist. Professor Zlatko Trkanjec briefly presented primary and secondary prevention of stroke.

During the Symposium, it was emphasized on several occasions that, in spite of many novel concepts on all aspects of stroke, prevention remained the most important component in reducing the prevalence of stroke, while preventive activities have gradually been changing the

fatalist views in approaching stroke, which is the leading cause of disability and one of the leading causes of mortality in the modern society.

The Academy anniversary celebration was completed by a party accompanying the Symposium closing ceremony.

Marijana Lisak

First Congress of Croatian Association of Oncology with international participation Zagreb, Croatia, November 28-30, 2001

Cancer is second only to cardiovascular diseases as the cause of death in the western world. Unfortunately, it is anticipated that in the next 5-10 years, deaths from cancer will exceed those from cardiovascular disease. It is generally known that virtually all doctors will come in contact with cancer patients in their practice.

Each year, over 20 000 new patients with malignant diseases are being diagnosed in Croatia, and approximately 11 000 die from it. This fact was one of the most important reasons why Professor Mirko Šamija with his team from the University Hospital for Tumors organized this Congress.

The Croatian Society of Oncology was founded in June 2000, and Croatian Society of Radiotherapy and Oncology in June 2001, at the time when the First Congress of the Croatian Society of Radiotherapy and Oncology was held. The founder of the Croatian Society of Radiotherapy and Oncology is Professor Zdenko Krajina.

The Congress took place in the beautiful city of Zagreb, on November 28-30, 2001. The Organizing Committee definitely succeeded in preparing an excellent program. During the Congress, which lasted for three days, with approximately 400 participants, among them some 30 from Kosovo, plenary lectures delivered by invited lecturers presented current approaches to all aspects of modern oncology including molecular oncology. Courses were organized in separate sections on the etiology, epidemiology, genetics, biology and pathology of cancer as well as on the principles of cancer surgery, chemotherapy, radiotherapy and palliative care. Other topics provided information on each of the common cancers and discussed the etiology, clinical presentation, examination findings, investigation and management of each cancer.

At the end of each Congress day, there was a poster session with poster presentation and discussion. I would like to emphasize that some of the very best lectures were

delivered by distinguished professors, Croats living and working abroad: E. Cvitković, L. Milas, D. Nižetić and B.I. Šikić. Branimir I. Šikić, Professor of Medicine and Director of General Clinical Research Center at Stanford University, presented a superb plenary lecture on DNA microarray technology in cancer research. Luka Milas, one of the invited speakers, is working at Department of Experimental Radiation Oncology, University of Texas. He elaborated the issue of integration of molecular targeting into radiotherapy of malignant tumors. Dr. Nižetić's group is working in London, at Division of Hematology, Oncology and Imaging at St. Bartholomew's and Royal London Medical School Queen Mary, University of London. He presented a very interesting paper on the regulators of tumor suppression, neurodegeneration and cellular protein turnover. Dr. Nižetić's group is known worldwide for cloning one ubiquitin specific protease (USP25) in the region of chromosome 21 associated with Alzheimer's disease and showing homozygous deletion and minimum overlap for frequent allelic loss in squamous non-small-cell lung carcinoma.

At the end of the Congress, the poster award session was held. The first poster presentation award was given to Marija Petković from Department of Oncology and Radiotherapy, Rijeka University Hospital Center, second to Danijela Bandić, University Hospital for Tumors, Zagreb, while Ivan Šamija from Sestre milosrdnice University Hospital received third poster award.

During the Congress, three satellite seminars on drugs given in palliative care were also organized.

No doubt, the participants of the Congress had numerous opportunities to meet friends and colleagues, and to make contacts during attractive cultural and social program as well as at the enjoyable opening party.

Ingrid Marton