

EDITORIAL

The Balkan Cities Association of Nephrology, Dialysis, Transplantation and Artificial Organs (BANTAO) was born in Ohrid on October 9, 1993. The war in former Yugoslavia negatively affected the development of nephrology and also the connections among nephrologists from the Balkans. However, there was willingness for further collaboration among nephrologists from the Balkans. The war in Yugoslavia created hate among people and the newly established countries, and there were problems with recognition of the names of the new countries; so, the nephrologists decided to apply the ancient principle of using the names of cities instead of countries as founders of the Association. The main goal of BANTAO is to promote scientific and technical cooperation in the fields of renal disease and artificial organs between the regions on the Balkan Peninsula and the world, to give an opportunity for exchange of experience and knowledge among experts in the area, and to engage in collaborative projects in order to demonstrate that cooperation is possible even on the turbulent Balkan Peninsula. The first BANTAO congress was held in Varna, 1995 (President, D. Nenov, Varna). The second congress of BANTAO was held in Struga, 1997 (President, M. Polenaković, Skopje). The third BANTAO congress was held in Belgrade, 1998 (President, Lj. Djukanović, Belgrade). The fourth congress of BANTAO was held in Izmir, 1999 (President, A. Akcicek, Izmir). The fifth congress of BANTAO was held in Thessaloniki, 2001 (President, P. Stathakis, Athens). The sixth congress of BANTAO was held for the second time in Varna, 2003 (President, D. Nenov, Varna). The seventh congress of BANTAO was held in Ohrid, 2005 (President, - M. Polenaković, Skopje). The eighth BANTAO congress was held in Belgrade, 2007 (President, V. Nešić, Belgrade). The ninth BANTAO congress was held in Antalya, 2009 (President, A. Basci, Izmir). The tenth BANTAO congress was held in Chalkidiki, 2011 (President, D. Tsakiris, Thessaloniki). The eleventh BANTAO congress was held in Timisoara, 2013 (President, A. Schiller, Timisoara). At the seventh BANTAO Congress, a CME Course was organized for the first time by ERA/EDTA and ISN/COMGAN entitled *Frontiers in Nephrology*, with seven distinguished speakers. A very important event in the existence of BANTAO was the appearance of the BANTAO Journal in 2003. The BANTAO Journal has been published bi-annually since 2003. Editors of the Journal were as follows: D. Nenov, 2003-2005; A. Basci, 2005-2009; and G. Spasovski, 2009-to the present.

The BANTAO Congress was established as the major scientific and institutional forum for Balkan nephrologists, with its own journal, indicating our will to communicate, to collaborate, to get to know each other, and to share our difficulties. More than just a professional

event, the BANTAO Congress has become a cultural phenomenon, through which we have discovered that we have many more things in common than we previously thought, and that now we must take every advantage to live and communicate in a world without political boundaries.

At present, the BANTAO Council has managed, in the spirit of peace, friendship and collaboration, to continuously strengthen this association, and moreover, to make it a reputable partner to the European and international associations. It is obvious that the BANTAO Council has succeeded in its initial targets. It is essential that nephrologists must come to know each other better. Now, more than ever, we have to learn what unites us, to tone down and even forget what divides us, to renew old and make new friendships, and to strengthen our peaceful relations, keeping in mind that we all work under the same oath of Hippocrates. It is in this 'BANTAO spirit', a spirit not only of local but also of global importance that could provide the basis for a peaceful world. Hence, we can achieve our goals only by joining together in our common beliefs and by collaborating and acting toward these objectives. In this way, we can live in a 'world without boundaries', a peaceful and prosperous one, even though confronted with the numerous boundaries that have been placed.

After the First BANTAO Congress, F. Valderrábano, then Chairman of the EDTA/ERA Registry, wrote in *Nephrology Dialysis Transplantation* (1996;11:740): "Nephrologists of the Balkan countries meet across political frontiers and war fronts – an example to politicians!"

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