

NEWS

The Fourth World Congress on Stroke

Melbourne, Australia, November 25-29, 2000

The Fourth World Congress on Stroke, organized by the International Stroke Society, was held in Melbourne, Australia, with more than 1400 participants from 64 countries. Croatia was represented by three papers from the Department of Neurology, Sestre milosrdnice University Hospital, Zagreb, and one paper from the Osijek University Hospital.

All aspects of stroke were covered by the Congress scientific program. Courses were organized, at which renowned experts presented the latest concepts of the organization of admission and management of acute stroke patients, results of clinical trials, problems encountered in cardiac patients with stroke, medicamentous intervention in acute stroke, use of diffusion – perfusion MRI in evaluation of cerebral lesion, and efficacy of therapy used in acute stroke, role of neurosonology in acute stroke, and neurorehabilitation.

A major part of the Congress was dedicated to presentation of new achievements in the treatment of acute stroke by intra-arterial and systemic thrombolysis. Also, the criteria for the use of therapy have been harmonized so as to minimize the occurrence of complications and to achieve maximal efficacy.

Presentations related to global stroke burden and to the strategy for its reduction, achievements in the field of imaging methods, and early rehabilitation had a prominent place in the Congress scientific program. Several sections were dedicated to controversial issues such as the treatment of non-ruptured aneurysms, use of anticoagulant therapy in acute stroke, angioplasty *versus* endarterectomy, and choice of antiaggregation drugs.

The audience were informed that some 5.5 million people suffer stroke *per* year! In less developed countries, stroke is the leading cause of death, whereas in developed countries it immediately follows malignant and cardiac

diseases. These data have imposed the high interest in primary and secondary prevention of stroke.

The Congress Organizing Committee organized a social program for the Congress participants in an effort to introduce them into some aspects of the life in Australia.

The Fifth World Stroke Congress will be held in Vancouver in 2005.

V. Vargek-Solter

Heart & Brain - Fifth International Conference on Stroke and 2nd Conference of the Mediterranean Stroke Society

The Fifth International Conference on Stroke and 2nd Conference of the Mediterranean Stroke Society, under the working title Heart & Brain, were held in Bosphorus Swisshotel, Istanbul, Turkey, March 21-24, 2001. The Conference was attended by more than 600 physicians, mostly neurologists and cardiologists, from Turkey, Israel, Europe, United States, Japan, Africa and Australia. Croatia was represented by three participants from Zagreb and Osijek. Professor Natan Bornstein from Tel Aviv, Israel, was president of the Conference Organizing Committee.

During the four-day Conference, plenary lectures delivered by invited lecturers presented current approaches to all aspects of stroke, with special reference to the association between ischemic heart disease and other cardiac disorders and stroke.

Upon registration procedure and welcome party, organized on Wednesday, March 21, the second day of the Conference, Thursday, March 22, was dedicated to plenary lectures covering topics of cerebral ischemia, risk factors for stroke, and heart - brain relations. Plenary lectures held on the third day, Friday, March 23, were dedicated to stroke prevention and stroke in young popula-

tion. Participants of the Conference presented their papers on clinical issues, therapy, prevention and epidemiology of stroke; papers presenting results of experimental studies of stroke in laboratory animals and humans were highly interesting indeed. On the last day of the Conference, Saturday, March 24, the participants of the Conference presented their papers on risk factors and therapy for stroke, heart - brain relations, clinical aspects of stroke, and transcranial doppler. These were followed by plenary lectures on novelties in the organization of acute care for stroke patients and acute management of stroke.

During the Conference, it was emphasized on several occasions that, in spite of significant advancements in all aspects of stroke, its prevention remained the most important means of reducing the prevalence of stroke. The need of more intensive screening, diagnosing and management of risk factors in asymptomatic patients, and especially in the form of secondary prevention in patients with a history of stroke, was emphasized.

Stroke remains to be one of the leading causes of mortality and the leading cause of disability. Preceded only by patients with Alzheimer's dementia and schizophrenia, stroke patients impose the greatest burden upon the society.

It has been generally accepted that stroke is a first-order medical emergency, and that stroke patients should be managed in properly equipped and organized stroke units, as the treatment of these patients in such units has proved to reduce the rates of mortality, morbidity and subsequent disability. It has also been generally accepted that the patients with ischemic stroke who have been hospitalized and have undergone necessary diagnostic workup (examination by a neurologist, brain CT, brain MRI if available, hematology, biochemistry and coagulation tests, etc.) within 3 hours from stroke onset, are candidates for thrombolytic therapy with recombinant tissue plasminogen activator (rt-PA). However, due to inad-

equately recognition of stroke symptoms, distance from hospital, different organization of ambulance service in various countries, traffic jams, etc., now only some 10% of these patients reach hospital and manage to undergo the required diagnostic procedure within a 3-hour period from stroke onset. This proportion of patients approaches 20% in best organized centers in the world. Nevertheless, it remains quite questionable whether further organization improvements could entail any significant end result at all, thus thrombolysis remaining a therapy reserved for a minority of patients.

Daily viewing of the posters presented by the Conference participants was organized throughout the Conference, and a prize for the best poster was awarded on the last day of the Conference. We are proud to emphasize that the prize for the best poster of the Conference was awarded to Dr. Davor Jančuljak from the Department of Neurology, Osijek University Hospital, for the poster entitled Duration of atrial fibrillation and occurrence of ischaemic stroke, by D. Jančuljak, J. Palić, D. Vukašinić, B. Barac, B. Radanović, D. Kadojić and R. Palić.

Besides the welcome party, a traditional gala-dinner was organized on Thursday, March 21, in the Ciragan Palace, however, only about a hundred participants could attend the dinner because of the limited hall capacity. Although sight-seeing of Istanbul was organized during the Conference, it was practically impossible to coordinate it with the dense Conference program and to do sight-seeing without missing some of the highly interesting plenary lectures. As the Conference was closed on Saturday, March 24, at 2.00 p.m., only the rest of the Saturday afternoon remained for sight-seeing of Istanbul, a city that was capital of three great empires in the past: Roman, Byzantine and Ottoman Empire.

Zlatko Trkanjec