

NEWS

International Postgraduate Course: 21st Summer Stroke School Healthy Lifestyle and Prevention of Stroke

This year's amazing educational experience was once again held in Dubrovnik, which hosted the 21st Summer Stroke School from May 31 to June 5, 2010.

The Course was organized by the Croatian Stroke Society, Croatian Society for Neurovascular Disorders, Croatian Medical Association, School of Medicine, University of Zagreb, and Central and East European Stroke Society.

Directors of the Course are: Academician Vida Demarin, University of Zagreb, Zagreb, Croatia; Professor Roman Haberl, University of Munich, Munich, Germany; Professor Kurt Niederkorn, University of Graz, Graz, Austria; Professor Tanja Rundek, University of Miami, Miami, USA; and Professor Zlatko Trkanjec, University of Zagreb, Zagreb, Croatia. Andro Vlahušić, MD, MS, and Mira Ivanković, MD as local organizers provided organizational support to the Congress.

The Course gathered once again great experts in the field of neurology and cerebrovascular diseases from all around. Lectures were interesting, yet educational and interactive. Throughout the week, we could enjoy and participate in the exchange of knowledge and experience from world famous neurologists who were more than willing to share it with the Course participants.

The Course traditionally started with Academician Demarin's greetings and opening remarks. She pointed out our objectives and future goals, and opened the Course with a lecture connecting neurology and art. This year, the emphasis was put on stroke prevention and stroke risk factors. Despite all improvements in the field, many stroke cases could have been prevented. Yet, treatment and rehabilitation were not neglected either. Sex differences in cerebrovascular diseases, as well as post-stroke aphasia and quality of life were

paid due attention. Also, interesting data were presented on Fabry disease and stroke in young adults.

It is hard to pick the most interesting lecture, so I have chosen to present a few. Fabry disease, its diagnostic and therapeutic possibilities were presented by Academician Demarin. Professor Trkanjec from Zagreb presented data and management options for post-stroke depression involving at least one-third of post-stroke patients. Post-stroke aphasia, reading and writing disorders, and their impact on the patient's quality of life after stroke were discussed by Professor Sinanović. Professor Haberl from Munich emphasized the importance of early diagnosis and treatment of transient neurologic attack. Atrial fibrillation and its management was a hot topic presented and discussed by Professor David Russel from Oslo. Our neuroradiologists, J. Hat, MD from Zagreb and E. Klein from Austria, presented new diagnostic possibilities in stroke, and interventional and up-to-date treatment of aneurysms. Professor Kadojić pointed out sex differences in our stroke patients. Assistant Professor Vanja Bašić-Kes gave a lecture on central post-stroke pain, and Hans van Elst presented an update on e-Tracking, novel and improved ultrasound software possibilities that help us greatly in vascular age assessment. My part was to present the concept of our newly opened Center for Prevention of Cerebrovascular Diseases and to point out the importance of physical activity and reduction of salt consumption in stroke prevention.

Many interesting case reports were presented and discussed in the classroom as well as at Department of Neurology on our visit to Dubrovnik General Hospital. This wonderful visit was prepared by our local organizers.

Altogether, it was a nice week of learning and communication, which left us with only greater appreciation of our profession!

Sandra Morović

The 50th International Neuropsychiatric Pula Congress

The congress with international participation entitled International Neuropsychiatric Congress took place on June 16-19, 2010 in Pula, Republic of Croatia. The Congress was held under personal auspices of President of Republic of Croatia, His Excellency Professor Ivo Josipović. The Congress was organized by the South East European Society for Neurology and Psychiatry International Neuropsychiatric Pula Congresses Kuratorium, with Academician Vida Demarin, Head of the University Department of Neurology, Sestre milosrdnice University Hospital in Zagreb, as Secretary General. Honorary President of the Kuratorium is Professor of Neurology (ret.) Boško Barac.

The Neuropsychiatric Pula Congress probably has the longest tradition in the fields of neurology and psychiatry, and this year it was special for celebrating its 50th anniversary. The tradition of this Congress started in 1961 as a rather small gathering of hardly 60 neuropsychiatrists, mostly from Zagreb and Graz. The founders of these meetings are now founding honorary members of the Congress Kuratorium: H. Bertha, Graz; R. Lopašić, Zagreb; A. Rosenzweig, Zagreb; G. Grinschgl, Graz; P. Kartin, Ljubljana; H. Lechner, Graz; F. Marguth, Munich; N. Peršić, Zagreb; J. Ristić, Beograd; W. Scheid, Köln; and O. Stochdorf, Munich. Scientists and specialists promoted collaboration between these two fields of medicine as well as between their divided, yet nearby countries. These meetings have grown over years into the largest scientific and professional event in this part of Europe, with eminent speakers and approximately 400 participants every year. This year's academic lecture (Fifty years of the International Neuropsychiatric Pula Meetings) was held by Boško Barac (Zagreb), who recalled the founders of the Congress, scientific programs and academic lectures held through five decades of the Congress history, and gave his personal view on the development and growth of these meetings since his first visit to Pula Congress in 1966.

The Congress consisted of main topic lectures in neurology and psychiatry, workshops, satellite symposia, teaching course and poster sections. Milestones in neurology and psychiatry in the last fifty years were

presented through lectures on a number of important and widespread neurological and psychiatric disorders, such as stroke, Parkinson's disease, multiple sclerosis, epilepsy, dementia, organic psychosis, neuropsychopharmacology and psychotherapy in psychiatry, etc. Development of neurosurgery in the last fifty years was also one of the main topics.

The 3rd International Epilepsy Symposium on Epilepsy Therapy was held within the frame of the Congress. It brought an overview of the history of epilepsy therapy, difficulties in the management of epilepsies, preoperative evaluation of epilepsy patients, and epilepsy surgery and outcomes.

A great number of satellite symposia took place during these four days. The need for interdisciplinary collaboration between neurology and psychiatry, which are now independent disciplines, is ever more recognized. Neurologists are becoming aware of the psychiatric symptoms in various neurologic disorders, as well as of the presence of highly disabling mood disorders in a great number of patients. On the other hand, with new diagnostic techniques, more data are available on the organic, molecular and biologic basis of psychiatric diseases. Special awareness of this relationship was tackled in a satellite symposium on psychosomatics, where both neurologists and psychiatrists, among them Professor Davor Miličić, Dean of the Zagreb University School of Medicine (Psychosomatic aspects of cardiologic patients), gave their view on the topic. There was also a symposium on forensic psychiatry and a session entitled Young Psychiatrists' Session: Meet the Expert – Brian Leonard, where a few of younger colleagues had a chance to present their work and give a lecture. In the Cell Cycle Abnormalities in Schizophrenia workshop, psychiatrists had an opportunity to acquire additional knowledge on this disorder.

Congress participants could also attend satellite symposia entitled What Does Slowing of Clinical Progression Really Mean? (Lundbeck) and Copaxone® – Foundation in Treatment of Multiple Sclerosis (Pliva).

For neurologists, an additional teaching course on stroke prevention and satellite symposium on subarachnoid hemorrhage were organized. Some of these courses and sessions were held in Croatian, while most of them were in English.

The joint meeting of the Research Group on Delivery of Neurological Services (RGODNS) of WFN, Central and Eastern European Stroke Society and INPC focused on the prevention of stroke. Since stroke is the second most common cause of death worldwide and also the leading cause of disability, continuous education on stroke prevention, diagnosis and treatment is necessary. Prevention is still the best approach to stroke, so health promotion campaigns focusing on healthy lifestyle, reduction of risk factors such as high blood pressure, cigarette smoking, diabetes mellitus and elevated cholesterol should be conducted. Exchanging knowledge on the epidemiology and means of prevention leads to a decrease in mortality due to stroke, as well as to extended survival and reduced post-stroke disability. Special attention was also paid to difficulties in recognizing and treating Fabry disease, an X-linked inborn error of glycosphingolipid catabolism due to deficiency of lysosomal hydroxylase, alpha galactosidase A. It is responsible for about 4% of cryptogenic strokes, and because it is treatable with enzyme replacement therapy, this patient population could be protected. An interesting relationship between stroke and art was presented on the example of a Serbian painter, with description of the onset of ischemic stroke and difference in artistic style afterwards. Painting is a very complex operation, involving brain areas responsible for motor action, perceptive, cognitive and emotional processing. Brain damage could therefore modify artistic expression. Right parieto-occipital damage leading to spatial ne-

glect, constructional apraxia or perceptual agnosia can change the spatial configuration of the whole painting or its parts, while extensive left hemisphere damage may result in simplification of detail of the objects presented.

Pain is a common symptom in various neurologic, but also psychiatric conditions. The joint meeting of the Pula Congress with Alps Adria Neuroscience Section on the diagnosis and management of pain focused on scientific aspects of pain, migraine and neuropathic pain, low back pain from neurosurgical point of view and psychotherapy in oncologic pain patients.

The social program of the Congress is something that has to be mentioned. Pula Congress has always been known for its friendly, warm atmosphere and cultural programs. After the academic lecture, opening of the Congress was enriched with traditional Istrian folk dances performed by the Mendula artistic group from Medulin. Gala dinner was held at beautiful seashore, and delicious Croatian food, music, great company and a chance to meet and catch-up with colleagues made this evening fun and a great memory for all.

Pula Congress covered many important neurologic and psychiatric disorders, and gave a valuable contribution to the current knowledge about the prediction, diagnosis and treatment of these widespread conditions. It definitely has an outstanding position in promoting the interdisciplinary, as well as international collaboration.

Maja Strineka