

Looking back at Lyon

The EFES president's view

The 6th ECE was a great success. François Berthezène (with his Local Organizing Committee) and Wilmar Wiersinga (with his Programme Organizing Committee) turned out to be a winning combination.

The scientific programme was excellent. It was a great decision to invite so many young, aspiring speakers who demonstrated that European endocrinology is clearly flourishing. Basic and clinical science were integrated throughout the programme and the variation and high quality throughout all four days kept delegates busy. The Oral Communication and Poster Sessions were well attended, and offered our youngest colleagues many opportunities for interaction.

The activities of François Berthezène and his LOC cannot be praised enough. The conference center, the organization, the social programme were all close to perfect: inviting and friendly.

In my opinion this 6th ECE continued the trend in improved quality and status of our now two-yearly meetings and the sharp increase in the number of abstracts and delegates backs this up. I am very optimistic about the viability, vitality, and especially the need for this conference. Can it improve even further? Bengt-Åke Bengtsson (chairman LOC) and Michael Sheppard (chairman POC) will show it can – see you at the 7th ECE in Göteborg, Sweden (3-7 September 2005).

STEVEN WJ LAMBERTS

The POC chairman's view

A record 2400 people attended the meeting in Lyon last April 2003 attracted, I believe, by the super scientific programme and the excellent venue.

The modern architecture of the congress venue was very appealing, and the congress rooms were well suited to their purpose: vast halls for the seven plenary lectures and 25 symposia, and smaller rooms for the 16 meet-the-expert sessions, 12 oral sessions and 12 poster discussion groups. Many young scientists were among the invited speakers which, together with the poster discussion groups, gave the meeting a youthful atmosphere.

1213 (94.5%) of the 1283 submitted abstracts (originating from 58 countries) were accepted for presentation, 72 as orals and 1141 as posters. France, Poland and Italy had the largest number of submissions with over 150 abstracts each whilst Turkey, Spain, Russia, Germany and Greece submitted between 50 and 100 abstracts each. The topics covered the whole field of endocrinology, and the scientific programme offered something on each topic each day. The only complaint I heard was that the programme was too good to allow a visit to the lovely city of Lyon itself!

Congratulations to the local organizers, especially Francois Berthézère and Coralie Hossenlopp, for such a well-organized meeting.

WILMAR WIERSINGA

All change on the EFES Executive Committee

A big thank you to departing members and a big welcome to those joining us. The committee is now as follows:

President

Professor S W J Lamberts
Rotterdam, The Netherlands

Vice President (and responsible for regional courses)

Professor I Gerendai
Budapest, Hungary

Secretary

Professor Dr J Köhrle
Berlin, Germany

Treasurer

Professor J S Christiansen
Aarhus C, Denmark

Chief Editor, European Journal of Endocrinology

Professor P Beck-Peccoz
Milano, Italy

Webmaster

Professor F Bayard
Toulouse, France

Dr E Ghigo

Turin, Italy

Professor A Milewicz

Wroclaw, Poland

POC Chairman 7th ECE Gothenburg

Professor MC Sheppard
Birmingham, UK

Committee member responsible for postgraduate clinical and basic courses

Professor S Webb
Barcelona, Spain

Full contact details can be found via www.euro-endo.org/executiv.htm. Biographical notes on each committee member will be published in the next issue.

Göteborg – here we come!

On behalf of the LOC, it is my sincere pleasure to invite you to the 7th ECE where the POC, chaired by Professor Michael Sheppard, will ensure an exciting environment for discussion of the latest developments in basic research and clinical practice in endocrinology. The 7th ECE is an all Scandinavian event, organized by a collaboration of Denmark, Norway and Sweden's endocrine societies. Göteborg, the second largest city in Sweden, will be the location. It is situated on the West coast, in the heart of Scandinavia, with a spectacular surrounding archipelago. We look forward to welcoming you in 2005.



Debate: Should there be a European

The case for

Federation: an alliance of largely independent units or groups [L. foedus, a treaty]
Society: an organisation of individual persons united by common interests and aims [L. socius, a companion]

As you can see, a federation unites bodies and organisations whereas a society takes care of individuals. EFES functions by taking care of the interests of the national societies. The national societies meanwhile maintain their own identity as well as their own politics.

Identity is an issue for EFES. A web search reveals other European federations such as the European Flying Discs Federation and the European Federation of American Football, whilst a search on the word EFES produces the finest Turkish beer and the largest Turkish brewery! Outsiders could be forgiven for thinking that the European Federation of Endocrine Societies is a drinking club that has very little to do with endocrinology!

An online search for European societies, on the other hand, produces the European Society of Cardiology (ESC) at the top. This is an organisation with 40000 members which owns the prominent European Heart Journal; it is proof that a society does not need to be a small club. Similarly, the European Respiratory Society has 5000 members and publishes the European Respiratory Journal; and the European Society of Human Reproduction and Embryology (ESHRE) has 4500 members and owns the journal, Human Reproduction. ESHRE serves as the local society for some countries in Europe which do not have their own reproduction society.

So, why not have a European Society of Endocrinology (ESE) with its own prominent journal, the European Journal of Endocrinology? ECE delegate numbers suggest that an ESE could, initially, attract between 3000 and 6000 members. However, as endocrinology is so central to medicine, why shouldn't the membership increase to match that of the ESC.

Since the early 1990s, when I was very much opposed to a European society and supported the Federation and its aims, much has changed. If you look at the political map of Europe, fifteen countries have united to form the EU; more have applied or are in negotiations, and Brussels and Strasbourg are making more and more decisions which are binding for all EU countries.

The endocrinological map has also changed. We started out with an organisation built around the journal *Acta Endocrinologica* which comprised the Scandinavian countries, The Netherlands, Germany and Switzerland. Although they built the core of European endocrinology, there was no political union. As more societies were founded, endocrinologists such as John Dymling, Vivian James, Luciano Martini and René Mornex led the way to the formation of a federation. In 1987, at the 1st ECE, when the federation was founded, EFES started out with 14 countries. Today it has 35 members, including Russia, thus representing a very large European endocrine community. It is time for an individual member-based European Society of Endocrinology.

The advantages of an individual member-based society are as follows:

1 Direct identification with the society's objectives.

At present, those members outside the EFES councils and committees are unfamiliar with the aims of EFES. Their view is limited to the Congresses and Postgraduate Courses.

2 Direct communication between endocrinologists.

By the simple fact of having a membership book, possibly in electronic form, all the addresses of all members would be available. Improved communication for research collaboration, training and European grant applications would become possible as would the opportunity to influence European legislation.

3 Direct influence on society affairs by virtue of members' voting rights

Rather than electing people to serve on the EFES General Assembly, young endocrinologists want to have direct influence on the issues within European endocrinology that affect them, such as job distribution and career structures.

"Outsiders could be forgiven for thinking that the European Federation of Endocrine Societies is a drinking club that has very little to do with endocrinology!"

Meetings are another area that could be improved by the existence of an ESE.

We have a track record for good scientific meetings, the ECEs, which have increased in quality over the years but, in addition, we have all the national society meetings. Making the ECE the main scientific event would preclude repetition in European national societies thus avoiding the current situation whereby speakers travel from one national congress to the other, often giving the same paper. Let us unite these meetings and combine them into one big European congress. This would simultaneously improve the quality of European congresses and reduce dilution of sponsors' funds.

Finally, representatives of an ESE would have a direct mandate to influence Brussels and Strasbourg, something which EFES has so far failed to do. A council and a president backed up by a society with 3000-6000 members could have a much stronger impact on European politics. This is vital as current proposals from Brussels do not place enough emphasis on endocrine research. European health politics could also be influenced more effectively.

Can a society of 35 countries be united? The US Endocrine Society represents 50 states and is thus able to afford 15 professional support staff and an office in Maryland. They have a significant influence on Congress, the President and on the decision makers in Washington.

I look forward to a time when we have one united society where we no longer compete against each other but work for the same goals.

EBO NIESCHLAG

These articles represent a summary of a debate which took place at the 6th ECE in Lyon. We invite your feedback – please contact the editor (Email: agburger@bluewin.ch).

Society of Endocrinology?

The Case Against

Ladies and gentleman, Ebo is a really nice chap. This must be so because he has a vineyard on the Rhine and secondly he likes opera. Despite this we have to be very careful about his arguments, particularly as he had a diametrically opposing view a few years ago. Schopenhauer said there were three stages of truth: Firstly, truth is ridiculed; secondly it is violently opposed; thirdly it is accepted as completely self evident. All these stages my dear friend Ebo has happily gone through in terms of a European Society for Endocrinology but we have to be cautious. Europe has changed and central and eastern Europe are hugely important parts of the European family which we do not want to disenfranchise. However, income levels are still different. Setting up a Society will be very costly and there is no infrastructure. We are in danger of a surfeit of meetings and the meetings that there are should not endanger the national identity of the home endocrine societies.

Let us first consider the European Federation of Endocrine Societies as it is. It is a non profit-making organisation for the promotion of endocrinology in Europe and enhances communication, research and education in endocrinology. It is largely run by an Executive Committee which is voted on every four years in such a way that the committee changes half its membership every two years at each of the European Congresses. There is a general council that meets every two years and there are 35 member countries and a large number of affiliated societies. The congresses are becoming increasingly successful. Academically they are of a very high calibre and numbers have increased steadily over the last few years. They encourage young endocrinologists and give them a platform for early exposure of their research endeavours. Every year there are European clinical and basic courses and at least two regional courses, usually in central and eastern Europe. There are also joint meetings between the national endocrine societies and EFES, usually with symposia chosen by members of EFES. The impact factor of the increasingly successful European Journal of Endocrinology (EJE) is rising. There is a very active website which publicises meetings and is the source of regular news alerts as well as being a resource for job and research opportunities within Europe. As well as this there is a newsletter which is circulated to 13,000 endocrinologists in Europe on a twice yearly basis. Lastly, but by no means least, there are a number of prizes including the EJE Prize and the Geoffrey Harris prize which result in first class lectures and papers from young and not-so-senior endocrinologists.

From this increasingly successful organisation we have to be very careful not to lose what has been gained, particularly in the last few years.

"It is also very important that the national identity of the endocrine communities, particularly in smaller countries, is not diminished."

To begin with we need a sound financial infrastructure; we also need an administrative infrastructure so that the burden of administration is lifted from academics and given to administration professionals. A clear structure of meetings throughout Europe and the individual countries is required so that each meeting runs minimal financial risk and

has high delegate numbers. It is also very important that the national identity of the endocrine communities, particularly in smaller countries, is not diminished.

The economics of being a member are also important so we need to be aware of the differing incomes in various parts of Europe. It would be hugely counter productive if central and eastern European endocrinologists were unable to join because of financial restrictions.

Next we must be absolutely sure that there is fair representation of all the countries involved in the administration of a society. This is particularly so for the smaller countries of Europe.

Perhaps the way forward is to run both the Federation and a Society in parallel for two years before finally, when all the above have been carefully worked out and democratically agreed, launching a Society for Endocrinology in Europe, with more members than any other endocrine society in the world.

JOHN WASS

Hot Topic

A new series of articles highlighting recent or forthcoming papers in European Journal of Endocrinology.

Age and lifestyle: their effects on testosterone

Are age and lifestyle factors associated with variations in testosterone levels? Svartberg and colleagues investigate this question using cross-sectional data from over 1500 men. Their study analyses the effects of various lifestyle factors on levels of sex hormone binding globulin (SHBG) and free and total testosterone.

Their analyses reveal that the investigated lifestyle factors have independent and direct effects on circulating active and total sex hormones levels.

Serum SHBG concentration is a major influence on levels of circulating active sex steroids. The age-related SHBG increase is considered responsible for a greater decline in free testosterone than total testosterone – a pattern confirmed by participants' ages and blood tests. Although body mass index proved to be the most important predictor of SHBG and total testosterone variation, variations in testosterone levels were also associated with participants' reports of chronic diseases.

This study provides evidence that lifestyle factors do affect sex hormone levels and should therefore be considered in clinical practice. It also suggests that free as well as total testosterone levels could be used for the diagnosis of hypogonadism.

Svartberg *et al.* *European Journal of Endocrinology* **149** 145-152 (www.eje.org/eje/149/eje1490145.htm)



Forthcoming Meetings and Courses

EFES meetings and courses

BES 2004: 23rd Joint Meeting of the British Endocrine Societies in association with EFES

Brighton, UK, 22-24 March 2004
 Contact: British Endocrine Societies, 22 Apex Court, Woodlands, Bradley Stoke, Bristol BS32 4JT, UK (Tel: +44-1454-642210; Fax: +44-1454-642222; Email: info@endocrinology.org; Web: www.endocrinology.org/sfe/confs.htm).

EFES Regional Postgraduate Course in Clinical Endocrinology

Wroclaw, Poland, 7-9 May 2004
 Contact: A Milewicz, Department of Endocrinology and Diabetology, Wroclaw University of Medicine, Pasteura 4, PL-56-367, Wroclaw, Poland (Tel: +48-71-3209603; Fax: +48-71-3282349; Email: milewicz@endo.am.wroc.pl).

3rd EFES Czech-Hungarian-Polish-Romanian-Slovak Regional Postgraduate Course in Endocrinology

Prague, Czech Republic, 4-6 November 2004
 Contact: J Marek & M Krsek, 3rd Department of Internal Medicine, 1st Faculty of Medicine, Charles University, U Nemocnice 1, 128 08 Prague 2, Czech Republic (Fax: +420 224919780; Email: mkrse@lf1.cuni.cz).

7th European Congress of Endocrinology

Göteborg, Sweden, 3-7 September 2005
 Contact: Congrex Göteborg AB, Ref. ECE 2005, PO Box 5078, SE-402 22 Göteborg, Sweden (Tel: +46-31-708 60 00; Fax: +46-31-708 60 25; E-mail: ece2005@gbg.congrex.se; Web: www.ece2005.com).

8th European Congress of Endocrinology 2007

Budapest, Hungary

Other meetings

1st Milan Thyroid Cancer Conference

Milan, Italy, 7-8 November 2003
 Contact: European School of Oncology, Viale Beatrice d'Este, 37, Milan, Italy (Tel: +39-02-43359611; Fax: +39-02-43359640; Email: conferences@esonology.org).

International Conference on Progress in Bone and Mineral Research 2003

Vienna, Austria, 27-29 November 2003
 Contact: Vienna Academy of Postgraduate Medical Education and Research, Alser Strasse 4, A-1090 Vienna, Austria (Tel: +43/1-405-13830; Fax: +43/1-405-138323; Email: bone2003@medacad.org).

Joint International Symposium on Calcitonin Gene-Related Peptide, Amylin and Calcitonin, 4th Symposium on Adrenomedullin and Proadrenomedullin N-20 Peptide

Zurich, Switzerland, 18-20 March 2004
 Contact: Prof. Dr J A Fischer, Research Laboratory for Calcium Metabolism, University of Zurich, Klinik Balgrist, Forchstr. 340, CH-8008 Zürich, Switzerland (Tel: +41-1-3861651; Fax: +41-1-3861652; Email: fischerj@balgrist.unizh.ch; Web: www.symposium2004.ch).

European Neuroendocrine Association

Sorrento, Italy, 24-27 April 2004
 Contact: Stefania Acanfora, MCM Congressi, Rione Sirignano, 5 80121 Napoli, Italy (Tel: +39-081-668774/7611085; Fax: +39-081-664372; Email: info@enea2004.it; Web: www.enea2004.it).

47th Journées Internationales d'Endocrinologie Clinique

Paris, France, 29-30 April 2004
 Contact: Dr G Copinschi (Fax: +32-2-5556239; Email: klotz@ulb.ac.be).

The Second International Congress on 'Adult Consequences of Childhood Endocrine Diseases'

Athens, Greece, 6-8 May 2004
 Contact: GE Krassas, Dept. of Endocrinology and Metabolism, Panagia Hospital, N. Plastira 22, N. Krini 55132, Thessaloniki, Greece (Tel: +30-2310-447444; Fax: +30 2310 447444/+30 2310 282476; Email: krassas@the.forthnet.gr; Web: www.ghsociety.gr).

16th International Symposium of the Journal of Steroid Biochemistry and Molecular Biology

Tyrol, Austria, 5-8 June 2004
 Contact: JR Pasqualini, Steroid Hormone Research Unit, Institut de Puériculture, 26 Boulevard Brune, 75014 Paris, France (Tel: +331-4539-9109; Fax: +331-4542-6121; Email: Jorge.Pasqualini@wanadoo.fr).

31st European Symposium on Calcified Tissues

Nice, France, 5-9 June 2004
 Contact: European Calcified Tissue Society, PO Box 4, Dursley GL11 6YL, UK (Tel: +44-1453-549929; Fax: +44-1453-548919; Email: admin@ectsoc.org; Web: www.ectsoc.org).

13th International Workshop on the Development and Function of the Reproductive Organs

Copenhagen, Denmark, 12-16 June 2004
 Contact: Congress Secretariat (Tel: +45-3946-0500; Fax: +45-3946-0515; Email: repro2004@ics.dk; Web: www.repro2004.ics.dk).

ENDO 2004: 86th Annual Meeting

New Orleans, LA, USA, 16-19 June 2004
 Contact: Beverly Glover, Administrative Assistant, Meetings, The Endocrine Society, 8401 Connecticut Avenue, Suite 900, Chevy Chase, MD 20815-5817, USA (Tel: +1-301-9410220; Fax: +1-301-9410259; Email: bglover@endo-society.org; Web: www.endo-society.org).

20th Annual Meeting of the European Society of Human Reproduction & Embryology

Berlin, Germany, 27-30 June 2004
 Contact: ESHRE Central Office, Van Akenstraat 41, 1850 Grimbergen, Belgium (Email: info@eshre.com; Web: www.eshre.com).

7th International Symposium on Neurobiology and Neuroendocrinology of Aging

Kloster Mehrerau, Bregenz, Austria, 18-23 July 2004
 Contact: Andrzej Bartke, Director of Research, Geriatrics Initiative, Southern Illinois University School of Medicine, PO Box 19636, Springfield, IL, USA 62794-9636 (abartke@siu.edu; Web: http://www.neurobiology-and-neuroendocrinology-of-aging.org).

International Congress of Endocrinology 2004

Lisbon, Portugal, 1-4 September 2004
 Contact: ISE, Department of Chemical Endocrinology, 51-53 Bartholomew Close, London EC1A 7BE, UK (Tel: +44-20-76064012; Fax: +44-20-77964676; Email: l.h.rees@mds.qmw.ac.uk; Web: www.jingo.com/ise/ice2004.htm).

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