

REPORTS AND NEWS

VIII NATIONAL AUDIOLOGICAL SYMPOSIUM ON PRESBYACUSIS WITH FOREIGN CONTRIBUTORS

The Książ Castle, Poland, 18–20 November 1999

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For the first time in a long run the National Audiological Symposium, held in the Książ Castle near Wrocław on 18–20 November 1999, was devoted to presbycusis. This scientific meeting, organised by the Audiological Section of the Polish Society of Otorhinolaryngologists, Head and Neck Surgeons (Chairman: **Professor W.J. Sułkowski**) in collaboration with the Occupational Health Centre in Wałbrzych, The Nofer Institute of Occupational Medicine in Łódź, and the Institute of Physiology and Pathology of Hearing in Warsaw, was attended by 156 specialists in this field of medicine from all over the country, as well as by prominent scientists from abroad, among others from the United Kingdom, Sweden and Israel.

The Symposium took place under the patronage of the Minister of Health, **Franciszka Cegielska**. In the message addressed to the organisers, the Minister expressed her belief that the VIII National Audiological Symposium will contribute greatly to solving the most essential problems concerning detection, treatment and rehabilitation of hearing impairments in the elderly.

Presbycusis is one of the main challenges facing audiology in the 21st century - as stressed by **Professor Antoni Pruszewicz** from Poznań - bearing in mind that besides noise-induced hearing impairments, this pathology is the most frequent cause of hearing loss in the adult population throughout the world. As depicted by epidemiological data, 18.3% of people under 25 years of age are affected by hearing impairments, whereas in the group of people under 65, this proportion increases to over 52%, in those aged over 65 years to 60%, and in the group aged over 75 years, this proportion reaches almost 75%.

This problem does also exist in Poland, mainly due to the extension of life expectancy; now the mean is 69 years for men, and over 77 for women. About 15% (over 15 million) of the population is affected by hearing impairments. Thus, this ailment has become an issue of the social dimension. The difficulties faced in the detection, diagnosis, treatment and rehabilitation of people with hearing impairment or hearing loss, as well as in the education, intellectual and professional development, and improvement of well-being and quality of life of those affected are the matter of profound importance not only from the medical, but also from the social and economic points of view.

Professor Moe Bergman (Israel) presented a review of research carried out on ageing audition. The natural physiological process of ageing audition begins after completing 40 years of age, and it accounts for a half of dB per year on average. There are, however, factors which may contribute to its exacerbation. Among them, vascular atherosclerosis, significantly increased blood cholesterol, and cardiovascular disease occupy the first places. Very interesting results of the study on the effect of vertebral and carotid arteries blood flow on the development of presbycusis were discussed by specialists from Poznań, and on the effect of cardiovascular disease and cardiovascular risk factors on hearing in the elderly by specialists from Grudziądz.

Ass. Professor Deepak Prasher (U.K.) devoted his presentation to the correlation between presbycusis and noise-induced hearing loss. Noise-induced hearing loss and the ageing audition process develop independently. A person with hearing loss induced by excessive noise is at the same time afflicted by hearing loss induced by the natural ageing process. These two factors overlap one another, and in consequence of their cumulating the hearing impairment becomes more severe.

The advantages and limitations of various diagnostic methods facilitating early diagnosis of hearing impairments were widely discussed. A number of participants, among them **Ass. Professor Sylwia Kowalska**, **Professor W.J. Sułkowski**, and **Dr Wojciech Guzek** from The Nofer Institute of Occupational Medicine, stressed the usefulness of otoacoustic emissions on the basis of their studies performed on etiologically healthy people over 60 years of age.

In view of the fact that presbycusis is frequently concomitant with other complaints, tinnitus for example, the participants of the Symposium devoted much attention to this question. Tinnitus is extremely annoying for patients who are tormented by undesired sounds causing great discomfort.

Recently, the ENT and Audiology Division at The Nofer Institute of Occupational Medicine has investigated methods for early detection of hearing impairments, and for diagnosis of tinnitus. A team of specialists from the Poznań Centre also presented interesting observations in this regard.

An interesting contribution on vertigo and balance disorders in the elderly, presented by **Professor Lars Odkvist** (Sweden), deserves to be mentioned here. Modern methods for diagnosing these disorders were also discussed among others by specialists from the Łódź Medical Academy.

During the Symposium, new generation of hearing aids was presented by the best known western companies specialised in their production: **WIDEX**, **OTICON**, **PHONAK**, **SIEMENS**, **STARKEY**, **SONO**, **SOLVAY PHARMACEUTICALS GmbH**.

The Symposium was highly praised by its participants for providing a useful forum for the exchange of views and experiences.

