

10TH NATIONAL CONGRESS OF THE POLISH ASSOCIATION OF OCCUPATIONAL MEDICINE

ŁÓDŹ, POLAND, 26–29 SEPTEMBER 2004

The 10th National Congress of the Polish Association of Occupational Medicine (PAOM), combined with the 50th Jubilee of the Nofer Institute of Occupational Medicine, took place in Łódź on 26–29 September 2004. The meeting of great importance to all the occupational medicine circles was held under the honorary patronage of President of the Republic of Poland Aleksander Kwaśniewski. The Honorary Committee comprised among others: Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Economic Affairs and Labour Jerzy Hausner, Minister of Health Marek Balicki, Minister of Scientific Research and Information Technology Michał Kleiber as well as the Voivode of the Łódź region and the President of the city of Łódź, the Chief Sanitary Inspector and the Chief Labour Inspector.

The Scientific Committee was chaired by Director of the Nofer Institute of Medicine Professor Konrad Rydzyński, and the Organizational Committee by Professor Wiesław Sułkowski.

The meeting was attended by 390 persons, including invited foreign guests. It comprised three plenary, fourteen panel, and eight poster sessions. There were 226 presentations, including 88 presentations during poster sessions.

The official opening of the meeting took place in the Łódź Great Theatre on Sunday 26 September. The ceremony participants listened to occasional addresses and jubilee congratulations conveyed to the Director of the Institute by representatives of the government, local authorities and research institutes. Two lectures were also delivered, one by ICOH Vice-President Professor Ruddy Facci on global health problems at workplace, the other on new challenges faced by occupational medicine as a scientific discipline was given by National Consultant on Occupational Medicine Dr. Ewa Wągrowka-Koski.

A large group of the Institute' outstanding employees was honored by the state decorations granted by the President of the Republic of Poland and medals issued especially on the occasion of the 50th Jubilee of the Nofer Institute. The symphonic concert added splendor to the opening ceremony and an official reception provided an opportunity for more informal communication.

The meeting was honored by the presence of Prof. Nikolay F. Izmerov (Russia), Prof. Monika Raulf-Heimsoth of BGFA in Bochum (German), and Dr. Carel Hulshof (the Netherlands) who also delivered lectures. The largest Łódź Universities were represented by Prof. Piotr Kuna and Prof. Iwona Stelmach (Medical University) and Prof. Zofia Żakowska (University of Technology).

The first plenary session was devoted to major accomplishments of the Institute during its 50-year operation and their practical implications for the health of working population. The keynote given by Professor Konrad Rydzyński was followed by presentations on clinical activities of the Institute (Dr. Janusz Izyski, Assistant Prof. Cezary Pałczyński), research on toxicology, carcinogenesis and pathomorphology (Prof. Konrad Rydzyński), harmful effects of chemicals and aerosols (Prof. Marek Jakubowski), physical agents (Prof. Jerzy Jankowski), environmental health hazards (Prof. Neonila Szeszenia-Dąbrowska), organization of health care system (Dr. Jerzy Kopias), work physiology and psychology (Prof. Teresa Makowiec-Dąbrowska), and scientific information and publishing (Prof. Sławomir Czerczak).

Dr. Jan Nosko presented activities and achievements of the School of Public Health.

A 50-year period of the dynamic development of research staff and infrastructure, extensive international coop-

eration, and multitude of implemented research projects created the base, on which occupational medicine in its theoretical and practical dimensions could provide many solutions of fundamental significance to the working population. All these accomplishments have placed the Institute among the leading research and developmental institutions not only at the national, but also at the international levels.

Topics presented and discussed at plenary sessions corresponded with the most vital aspects of current clinical occupational medicine.

Panel and poster sessions were devoted to the following groups of subjects:

Occupational allergy, one of the most dynamic clinical disciplines of occupational pathology. A growing incidence of allergic diseases, including those of occupational origin, observed in the great part of developed countries during the recent years, has entailed enormous social and economic costs. That is why allergy is nowadays perceived as a serious public health problem. The majority of outstanding scholars in the field predict further increase in the incidence of allergy, and thus it can be expected in time perspective that the proportion of population contracting varied allergic diseases will be increasing. The recent years have brought about evident changes in the structure of identified occupation-related harmful health effects.

Owing to improved hygienic conditions, the occurrence of toxic effects resulting from occupational exposure to hazardous substances has markedly declined, whereas the prevalence of diseases determined by mechanisms responsible for hypersensitivity and immunotoxicity is still increasing. Therefore, it is essential to precisely determine the range of the problem and develop standards of diagnostic procedures, certification, and prevention. The concepts of surveillance programs as a modern tool of occupational allergy prevention, presented by Assistant Prof. Cezary Pałczyński, appeared to be very interesting.

Other topics: The findings on new methods for diagnosing allergies to occupational allergens of particular significance and the efficacy of induced sputum as a non-invasive method used to confirm the results of specific provocation with allergens occurring in the work environment; the mod-

ern management of patients with occupational asthma; risk factors in occupational allergy and results of pioneer studies of allergies to metals contained in implants; the results of studies of contact hypersensitivity in workers of the textile industry, the effect of occupational exposure to textile dust on the development of the airways immediate allergy; and a case report on bissinosis.

Other aspects of clinical occupational medicine. Panel sessions devoted to clinical occupational medicine were combined with the session of the satellite network "Textiles and Health". A number of interesting research and practical findings on the most important clinical syndromes and aspects of their diagnosis, certification, and prevention were demonstrated.

Main topics: the most up-to-date methods used in the diagnosis and treatment of vibratory syndrome; the role of occupational exposures to hazards in the pathogenesis of chronic neurological diseases; and the occupational risk of carpal tunnel syndrome.

The modern audiology and occupational phoniatrics. Diagnostic and certification procedures in occupational diseases of the hearing organ; occupational risk factors of hearing loss, and new preventive methods; voice organ pathology and new diagnostic methods (method of acoustic analysis); occupational diseases of the voice organ; and new curative methods.

Psychology. A growing importance of psychology in the care of working populations is closely related with psycho-social factors recognized as a significant aspect of the worker's role. Speakers stressed the influential role of psychology, starting with preventive pre-employment examinations through therapeutic procedures in traumatic events occurring in the course of job performance to psycho-social determinants of returning to work and adaptation after somatic diseases. Much attention was also given to problems of violence at work, including individual differences and consequences experienced by its victims.

Workers' health policy. Quality of health services provided: methods of quality control; integrated management of health and safety at work; basic strategies of health care of working populations; economic criteria for assessing workers' health

management; satisfaction of health service recipients recognized as an important measure of health service quality.

Activities of voivodeship occupational health centers in Poland were analyzed and an idea of introducing "quality books" as an essential element of the system of certification of primary occupational health institutions was presented.

The impact of the work environment agents on the circulatory system and the effects of exposure to carcinogenic agents in the work environment and related consequences.

Health effects of occupational exposure to electromagnetic fields. New sources of exposure (ionic cyclotron resonance) and practical forms of protection against their health effects, taking account of necessary amendments in the related legislation.

Work physiology and ergonomics. Changes in the age-related work adaptation processes; differences in the level of physical fitness; effects of occupational stressors, hot and cold microclimate, locomotor system loads in health service workers (physicians performing ultrasonic examinations, nurses) and workers of large shopping centers – their evaluation and prevention.

Clinical toxicology. Chemical terrorism, presentation of cases of acute poisoning by nitric oxide and arsenous hydride; and the role of laboratory tests in the assessment of toxic effects of acetaminophen on kidney functions.

Biological health hazards. Health hazards related to occupational exposure to biological agents; practical aspects of prevention and certification in occupational medicine.

Work hygiene. Methods of qualitative and quantitative assessment of occupational exposure to various agents; techniques used in determining noxious substances and factors at workplaces; problems of setting levels of hygiene standards.

Health promotion. Objectives and operation of programs designed for preventing diseases of the locomotor system, negative effects of tobacco smoking by pregnant women, and alcohol abuse; attempts to define needs of occupational medicine physicians in the area of health promotion; comparison of solutions and strategies applied in Poland with those implemented in other countries of the European Union; health promotion at work – evaluation of its developmental perspectives in Poland.

Transformation of health care system for the working population in Poland. Aims and targets of the MATRA Polish-Dutch project "Redefinition of responsibilities of the Ministry of Health for occupational medical services in Poland"; the report on workshops organized under this project, and the report elaborated by an expert representing the MATRA Dutch Consortium.

The 10th meeting was combined with the General Assembly of the PAOM delegates. The main objective of the Assembly was to evaluate the PAOM activities and to lay down its future developmental directions. The Assembly elected a new Board and Ryszard Andrzejak, Professor of Internal and Occupational Medicine of the Wrocław Medical University, President of the Polish Association of Occupational Medicine. The Assembly agreed that the next congress will take place in Opole in 2008.

The 10th Congress of the Polish Association of Occupational Medicine provided an excellent opportunity to evaluate the present condition of occupational medicine in Poland, exchange experience, and outline directions of further research works in the majority of occupational medicine disciplines, including clinical ones, work hygiene and physiology, psychology and many other fields directly associated with the health of working populations. It also contributed to a stronger integration of people involved in occupational medicine throughout the country, which should result not only in strengthening and expanding cooperation between different links of occupational medicine in Poland, but also in advancing international research cooperation with leading foreign centers.

The meeting deserves a high appraisal in terms of its organization and scientific standard. It accomplished a useful role in the process of consolidation of all our efforts for further improvement in the epidemiological situation among working people.

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