

From Raffaele De Caterina



My memories of the Working Group on Thrombosis are deeply intertwined with those of the European Society of Cardiology (ESC) itself. I had participated, as a young doctor still being trained in Cardiology, to one of the first meetings of the Society, held in Düsseldorf. At that time, the ESC meetings were held once every few (perhaps four) years. I enormously appreciated the “European atmosphere” at that meeting, perhaps less good in science than the corresponding “big” American meetings, but so much more full of flavour! Over the next years, mostly corresponding with my training in the United States, I neglected the ESC congresses, and I have to thank Freek Verheugt for resurrecting my European interest as a scientist, when he invited me to the Nice congress in 1994, while I was completing my Visiting Lectureship at the Brigham and Women’s Hospital in Boston. Freek had organized a Symposium on platelet methods, and I gave a lecture on the bleeding time, at that time (and still now, I believe) the most comprehensive test of platelet function existing.

In 1998 I was elected in the Nucleus of the Working Group, under the Chairmanship of John F. Martin, and I acted as Secretary-Treasurer. We had several meetings of the Nucleus at that time, mostly in London, and our main effort at that time was to raise the money to run various Nucleus activities, mostly centered around the ESC Congress. A problem at that time was to convince prominent scientists from outside Europe, or non-cardiologists, to attend the ESC Congress. By raising money through the help of some pharmaceutical companies, we were able to invite persons who would not have attended the Congress otherwise. The next term of Chairmanship, under the lead of Desmond Fitzgerald, has been one of the most significant, in my recollection. Several new initiatives were brought into action. These included the creation of the ESC Young Investigator Award on Thrombosis, to recognize the best contributions on thrombosis by young scientists at the ESC Congress; the institution of the Working Group on Thrombosis Fellowship Programme, enabling young scientists to spend two years with full funding in foreign European institutions to perform research on thrombosis under proper guidance by prominent scientists; the organization of the first scientific extramural meeting of the Working Group, held in Lisbon in the year 2000, in the transition between Desmond’s and my Chairmanship; the organization of courses on Antithrombotic Therapy in Coronary Heart Disease, started by Steen Dalby Kristensen and myself at the European Heart House in 1999 and held continuously every one-and-a-half year since then (perhaps the longest-lasting initiatives of the ESC Training Programme, now at its sixth edition!); the organization of the Cocktail reception for the entire Working Group during the Annual ESC Congress.

During my Chairmanship, in the years 2000-2002 other members of the Nucleus were Lina Badimon (vice-Chairperson), Desmond Fitzgerald (Past-Chairman), Steen Dalby Kristensen (Secretary-Treasurer), Gilles Montalescot, Freek W.A. Verheugt (gladly he was re-elected as a member of the Nucleus!), Kurt Huber, and Keith Fox. We had 6 meetings of the Nucleus, two of which were held in the city to which I mostly feel to belong, Pisa. Those who were able to come, in one occasion, will remember a memorable guided visit to the tower of Pisa and, on another occasion, to the house of Giuseppe Puccini at Torre del Lago – two nice intermissions in the planning work which has made the “fortune” of our Working Group. We

were able to continue all activities formerly started, including the Thrombosis Award and the biannual fellowship. The second extramural scientific meeting of the Working Group, organized by myself and Lina Badimon, took place in Florence in the Spring of 2003, and was unanimously regarded as a scientifically outstanding meeting. I attempted to increase the communication between the Nucleus and the individuals belonging to the Working Group by implementing a series of six Newsletters, updating people of the numerous activities going on, otherwise mostly unknown by the majority of the participants. During my Chairmanship, an initiative launched under John Martin's term was implemented in practice, namely the Task Force on Antiplatelet Agents, guided by Carlo Patrono, aimed at uniforming the practical use of antiplatelet agents over Europe on the basis of solid pharmacological premises.

The Working Group on Thrombosis increased its membership to 152 members as of February 2002. It is not a huge Working Group, but does not aim at becoming huge! It has many other good virtues: it is active, very active: initiatives such as those of the Fellowship Programme, of the Young Investigator Award, and of the extramural Congress have been envied and emulated; it is a fully democratic body; it is led by people with different expertise, but common reciprocal esteem; it is well funded. And I am sure I am forgetting many things that others will remind.

Time goes by quickly, and here the lead, since the end of 2002, is to Lina, and next to Steen, all become in the meantime, together with my predecessors, deep friends of mine. The pleasure of team work has been a real perk of these years. Very often I had to take quick decisions, but these were all in tune with my colleagues' feelings, because of mutual trust and confidence. It has been a privilege and a deep honour to serve in this role, collaborating to the formation of an European community, working on problems related to thrombosis in Cardiology. Europe has become in this sense my own Country.

Raffaele De Caterina
Chairperson 2000-2002

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