

1st POLISH HEART FAILURE AWARENESS DAY

This year Poland joined 40 European countries celebrating the Heart Failure Awareness Day, under the auspices of the Heart Failure Association of the European Society of Cardiology. This activity is a part of the World Heart Failure Awareness Program, aiming to promote prevention, early diagnosis and treatment of heart failure as a global priority of health care.

The event was organized by the Department of Coronary Disease and Heart Failure of Jagiellonian University, Medical College, John Paul II Hospital in Cracow, at the initiative of the Heart Failure Working Group of the Polish Cardiac Society (PCS) represented by Professor Jadwiga Nessler and Association of Heart Failure of the European Society of Cardiology represented by its former president – professor Piotr Ponikowski. The co-



organizers of the event were “S`ART Production” Agency, “For Heart Foundation” and Cracow Branch of the PCS. The celebration was held at remarkable place – Krakow Main Market Square.

Many distinguished persons took the patronage of the 1st National Heart Failure Awareness Day in Poland, including: Mayor of Krakow, Professor Jacek Majchrowski, Marshal of the Malopolska Voivodship Marek Sowa, the Rector of the Jagiellonian University Professor Wojciech Nowak, Vice-Rector of the Jagiellonian University Medical College Professor Piotr Laidler, Dean of the Faculty of Medicine of Jagiellonian University, Professor Tomasz Grodzicki, Director of the John Paul II Hospital in Krakow Dr. Anna Prokop-Staszecka, President of the Polish Cardiac Society Professor. Zbigniew Kalarus, National Consultant of Cardiology Professor Grzegorz Opolski and Member of Polish Parliament Ms. Beata Małecka-Libera. Marshal of the Polish Parliament doctor Ewa Kopacz and Former President of Poland Lech Walesa supported the celebrations addressing special letters to the participants.

Similarly to other European countries, the heart failure morbidity in Poland is rapidly increasing. It is estimated that about 1 million of Polish citizens suffer from this condition. It is the leading cause of hospitalization in Poland, generating huge costs for the National Health Fund. It is responsible for approx. 60 000 deaths per year. Heart failure emerges not only as medical, but also increasing social and economic problem.

The main goal of the 1st National Heart Failure Awareness Day was to bring heart failure to attention of the community, politicians and health care administrators. Motto of the event was: "Heart failure - a treatable and preventable disease"

Although heart failure is a disease with poor prognosis, it can be prevented and, in early stages, effectively cured with modern methods. This is why spreading the knowledge about the causes, diagnosis and treatment of heart failure is so important. To approach to this goal, the Chairman of the Working Group of Heart Failure of PCS - Professor Jadwiga Nessler, organized in Warsaw press conference "Challenges and perspectives of care for patients with heart failure." The conference was attended by professor Janina Stępińska - Former President of PCS, professor Grzegorz Opolski - National Consultant of Cardiology, and 22 journalists. During the conference professor Stępińska discussed the problem of heart failure in Poland, prof. Grzegorz Opolski delivered a lecture entitled "Polish reality - what should we do better?" And prof. Jadwiga Nessler discussed the question: "What has been already done and where are we going." Press releases can be found at (<http://www.niewydolnoscserca.com.pl/program>). As the result of this meeting „The Passport of the Patient with Heart Failure” project was launched. The passport is designed to gather all the important information about heart failure in particular patient, improve communication between general practitioners, cardiologists and other specialists in order to establish and maintain best possible care. Several days prior to the celebration of the Heart Failure Awareness Day, several interviews with the heart failure experts were transmitted by television and radio stations.

Following this preparation, central celebration of 1st National Heart Failure Awareness Day took place in Krakow. Several thousands of inhabitants visited the Main Market Square during this sunny day and gathered near the centrally located scene. The program included short presentations, expert discussions, panel debates and interviews with patients well-known for their artistic or political achievements. Several artists gave concerts between the presentations. Interviews with the participants and short expert talks were transmitted by the radio stations throughout the day.

The celebration of National Heart Failure Awareness Day also included debates of pulmonologists, oncologists and activists of the “Cracow Smog Alarm”, who discussed the problem of air pollution, as a risk factor of lung and cardiovascular diseases. Oncologists discussed the problem of heart failure complicating cancer therapy.

Near the scene practical workshops on cardiovascular disease prevention, promotion of healthy lifestyle, cardiac rehabilitation and resuscitation were held. Tai Chi relaxation

exercises were taught and rock&roll show was presented by kids from the "Children Cardiology Patrol". The event was attended by members of the association of heart transplant patients sharing their heart failure experiences.

The festival was completed by the performances of the famous local artists and young students singing and dancing. Detailed program of 1st National Heart Failure Awareness Day is available at (<http://www.niewydolnoscserca.com.pl/program>).

During the National Heart Failure Awareness Day physicians from Department of Coronary Disease and Heart Failure conducted questionnaires of the risk of heart failure in consecutive persons present on the Market Square. After analysis of the questionnaires, those with an increased risk of heart failure, were then invited for specialized diagnostic tests and medical consultation to the Department of Coronary Artery Disease and Heart Failure in Cracow Specialist Hospital. John Paul II, during the so-called. "White Saturday", organized on June 7th, 2014 r.

Special Heart Failure Awareness Day website was active prior to the event and it was updated thereafter. It contains the report about the celebration, photo gallery as well as information for patients concerning health promotion and about diagnosis and treatment of heart failure.

A great achievement of the was the development of the mentioned Passport of Patient with Congestive Heart Failure - a personal booklet of the principles of prevention, diagnosis and treatment of heart failure, containing forms to be filled by treating physicians in order to improve the education of the patient and communication of all physicians taking care of the patient. In cooperation with the Polish College of General Practitioners, summary of recommendations for the diagnosis and treatment of the heart failure of the ESC is being prepared. This document is intended to help family doctors to widely implement the main recommendations in everyday ambulatory practice. The idea of these recommendations is the include GPs in the heart failure care system.

The Heart Failure Working Group of PCS represented by Professor J. Nessler held also the honorary patronage of the event "Picnic with a heart", organized by the Foundation for the Development of Transplantation in 11th May 2014 in Poznań. During this event the healthy lifestyle and physical activity was promoted.

The success of The First National Heart Failure Awareness Day in Poland makes it necessary to continue this idea in the following years.