

Working Group 23

Annual Report 2000-2001

In last year's report Andrew Newby (outgoing chairman) focused on the future of WG 23 'The pathogenesis of atherosclerosis'. Arguably this should be one of the largest and most active working groups of the society given the pivotal role of atherosclerosis in most cardiac disease. Yet, we remain a small, but committed, group and through the efforts of our members we continue to propose and host high quality symposia that enhance the scientific content of the annual meeting substantially. This year is no exception as evidenced by the list below. But how many people will attend the symposia?

Title Date/Time Location

- ▶ **Mending a broken heart: origin and manipulation of cardiovascular cell phenotype**, Sunday 2 11.00 Room C4 (Red Zone)
- ▶ **Cardiovascular hormone replacement therapy: is there a benefit for the risk?** Sunday 2 14.00 Room C8 (Red Zone)
- ▶ **Diabetes and the heart**, Sunday 2 14.00 Room A10 (Blue Zone)
- ▶ **DNA array systems and molecular genetics: unravelling the origins of hypertension and atherosclerosis?** Monday 3 11.00 Room B2 (Blue Zone)
- ▶ **White blood cells and vascular remodelling**, Monday 3 14.00 Room B2 (Blue Zone)
- ▶ **New insights into what goes on inside the miraculous monocyte**, Monday 3 16.30 Room B2 (Blue Zone)
- ▶ **Gene therapy - a choice of powerful new tools**, Tuesday 4 08.30 Room B2 (Blue Zone)
- ▶ **Nuclear hormone receptor-directed therapy - an emerging concept for cardiovascular disease**, Wednesday 5 08.30 Room B2 (Blue Zone)
- ▶ **Cyclooxygenase-2 expression and inhibition in cardiovascular disease**, Wednesday 5 11.00 Room B2 (Blue Zone)

As always, we remain a group whose interests lie predominantly in laboratory research trying to get our message across in a congress dominated by clinical cardiologists, many of whom have contributed little if anything towards the costs of attending the meeting. Most basic scientists, on the other hand, have to pay for their attendance from their research grants. Not surprisingly, therefore, basic scientists vote with their feet and stay away from the ESC main congress.

Is anything changing? Well it seems at the very least the ESC has formally recognised the problems and is starting to do something about them. Firstly, this year, for the first time all basic science sessions throughout the meeting will be in adjacent lecture rooms, making it easier for basic scientists to mix and attend similar sessions to their own. Secondly, ways are being sought of covering the cost of attendance.

However, a working group such as ours must first ask the question what should our role be in the ESC? Is it to talk amongst ourselves about issues of interest to us, or is it to disseminate advances in basic science pertinent to clinical cardiology to the broader cardiological community? If the former, then the risk is that we will simply become a 'basic science' ghetto tucked away and forgotten in a corner of the congress centre. If the latter, then what is needed in the main congress is a focus on educating clinicians on the advances in basic science that underpin their current and future clinical practice. In so doing we should seek to link in with as many other clinical working groups as possible and contribute to their symposia. This requires considerable effort and interaction between members of different working group nuclei. It is my view that the latter pathway is likely to be the more successful since we have ample opportunities to discuss the detail of our science at numerous national and international specialist meetings. One such example is the forthcoming meeting in Ulm.

2nd European Meeting on Vascular Biology in Medicine, Neu-Ulm, Germany 27-29 2001

Travel grants for young investigators

This initiative of the German Cardiac Society and, in particular, Prof. Michael Piper, first took place in Nuremberg in 1999. The idea was to provide a regular European forum for Symposia and free

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communications covering all areas of vascular Biology, but particularly as it is allied to Cardiovascular Medicine. It is quite complementary to the objectives of the European Vascular Biology Association (EVBA), which organises individual single subject focussed symposia approximately once each year. The EVBA has a wider remit though into areas such as tumour biology, for example, that don't fall entirely under the Cardiovascular umbrella.

Given its origins it was not surprising that the first VBM meeting was dominated by German contributions. To widen its European base, the meeting therefore asked our Working Group and those on Cellular Biology of the Heart, Microcirculation and Thrombosis to join in the organisation of the Ulm meeting. Representatives of EVBA later joined in.

A broad and excellent programme has been developed (see www.dgkardio.de/Tagungen/index.html) involving invited scientists from the US and many European countries. Areas as diverse as lipids, apoptosis, angiogenesis, oxidative stress and vascular remodelling are all included. A good response in terms of free communications has been obtained and oral presentations are to be integrated into the programme rather than run as parallel sessions.

The Science Council of the ESC voted 10, 000 Euros for travel grants to support young investigators from outside Germany to attend. (German applicants are supported by the German Cardiac Society (DGK)). This sum was divided up equally between the 4 working groups and grants are to be awarded at the discretion of the Nucleus of each WG. In our case we have decided to allocate 5 awards of 500 Euro each. Priority will be given to scientists under 35, who have had oral communications accepted. Requests for funds should be addressed to the Chairman together with a copy of the letter of acceptance from the VBM meeting.

The shape of future VBM meetings will soon be decided. The hope is that they will continue more directly under the auspices of the ESC rather than the DGK. They perhaps should become a regular responsibility of the four participating WGs and the EVBA with the chairmanship of a local organiser. The great advantage of the last two VBM meetings is that they were organised by the DGK in conjunction with their autumn meeting. This model is unlikely to suit the ESC, although they might be prepared to take over logistic support for a meeting organised independently earlier on in the year. The opinions of our WG collectively and individually will have a decisive influence on the future of the VBM meetings. Please channel comments to Andrew Newby (A.Newby@bris.ac.uk) who has been representing our WG on the scientific committee of the VBM meeting and as a member of the Science Council has a special interest in basic science initiatives.

Chairmanship of the working group

Because of an ever increasing burden of commitments, I (Peter Weissberg) have decided to stand down as chairman of the working group prematurely this year. Chairmanship of the WG requires considerable commitment if the WG is to thrive and move forward. Unfortunately, I do not feel I can devote sufficient time to do the job properly. Therefore, it is proposed that at the Stockholm meeting the Chairmanship will pass to Seppo Yla-Herttuala (current vice-chairman) who I know will do a splendid job. To maintain the pragmatic tradition of the WG secretary being in the same institution as the chairman, Cathy Shanahan will resign as secretary and Seppo has proposed that she is replaced by Dr Marja Laitinen, a cardiologist in his institution.

Peter Weissberg
Chairman WG 23