

European Society of Cardiology

History of the Working Group on Thombosis

(ESC number 18, formerly called: Working Group on Thrombosis and Platelets)

compiled by Raffaele De Caterina, MD, PhD

List of Chairpersons and Vice-Chairpersons

| Year | Chairperson | Vice-Chairpersons |
|-------------|------------------|-------------------|
| 1980 – 1982 | Bricaud | Lüscher |
| 1982 – 1984 | Lüscher | Bricaud |
| 1984 – 1986 | Bricaud | Duckert |
| 1986 – 1988 | Duckert | Brochier |
| 1988 – 1990 | Brochier | Prentice |
| 1990 – 1992 | Prentice | Verstraete |
| 1992 – 1994 | Verheugt | Patrono |
| 1994 – 1996 | Patrono | Martin |
| 1996 – 1998 | Martin | Fitzgerald |
| 1998 – 2000 | Fitzgerald | De Caterina |
| 2000 – 2002 | De Caterina | Badimon Maestro |
| 2002 – 2004 | Badimon Maestro | Dalby Kristensen |
| 2004-2006 | Dalby Kristensen | Huber |
| 2006-2008 | Kurt Huber | Andreotti |
| 2008-2010 | Andreotti | Arnesen |

Preamble

Historia magistra vitae

History, master of life

Livy (Titus Livius, 59 BCE - 17 CE): Roman historian, author of the authorized version of the history of the Roman republic

In taking the lead as Chairperson of the Working Group on Thrombosis in 2000, I felt that it was important to reconstruct its brief history through the words of the persons who had served as Chairpersons. History is important, because it gives an answer – or tries to do so - to the universal need, in general, to understand who we are. We can only grasp this if we understand where we come from and why we are here, serving in a role. The Working Group on Thrombosis was established in the '60s, in the process of the general current shaping of the European Society of Cardiology. Constituent bodies of the Society are National Societies, from various affiliated countries, and Working Groups. These were intended, and still are, mostly, as the “scientific motor” of the Society, collecting active scientists in the cardiovascular area from whatever country in Europe around common themes. The history of a Working Group on Thrombosis, one of the original Working Groups of the Society, is therefore a history of the interaction of persons from different origin, and often from quite different background, organizing the scientific activities of the Society in this area of knowledge at the best of their intelligence and drive. At the beginning, this was mostly the Congress, but more and more, in recent years, the Working Group has expanded its scope through initiatives, many of which ongoing, who continue far beyond the organization of scientific sessions at the yearly venue. It is the impression of the writer that this task of compiling impressions and memories by those who led the process in their time is not futile, and serves the purpose of constituting the pedestal, a solid one, on which we now stand. Overall – and again this is a personal impression of the writer – they give the idea of a highly active and dynamic body. A practical consequence, and possibly the most important achievement in this process, was to cement solid relationships of personal esteem, and often true friendship, among people from different European cultures and backgrounds. This has been an incredible thrill for most of us, and served the immensely valuable goal of cementing a true “European” spirit. Here is a brief outline from those who answered to my solicitation of leaving a written track of their action in this context.

Raffaele De Caterina

From Marc Verstraete – Vice-Chairman 1990-1992

October 2002

Dear Dr. De Caterina,

I received your circular letter concerning the ESC's Working Group on Thrombosis. I remember having arranged several symposia for this Working Group and lectured at even more than those which I had structured. I am not much of a record keeper and a few years ago I discarded whatever I had in my office! This means that I can not help you very much in your efforts to reconstruct the memory of this group. I even do not remember if I was at one time President as I give more importance to functions than titles. No doubt others will be of a more positive help.

With my best regards,

Marc Verstraete

From Mireille Brochier – Chairman 1988-1990



Association de Cardiologie
De Centre Val de Loire
Présidente
Pr. Mireille BROCHIER

Tours, September 17th 2002

Dear Colleague,

Thank you very much indeed for trying to realize a sort of “memory” of the Working Group on Thrombosis. The dates concerning Chairman and Vice-Chairman duration are correct.

I remember that the decision to create such a Working Group during the ‘80s came from the recent importance of thrombosis as the most determinant process for acute myocardial infarction. We decided to add “Platelets” to Thrombosis because among the interested persons were some hematologists and fundamentalists who were involved in platelet aggregation and the recent interest in anti-aggregant drugs.

Concerning my good friend Pr. VERSTRAETE from Leuven, I quite remember that he did decide to accept a Vice-Chairman position but refused the Chairman’s one due to too much work in his own laboratory.

Presently, I am no more interested in all the meetings of the European Society of Cardiology since I am now involved, essentially, in prevention of cardiovascular diseases. Nevertheless, I am always interested in reading all news about one of the most important Working Groups of our European Society.

I just would like to insist on the aim we had previously to work together, cardiologists and hematologists or biologists, experts in Thrombosis, in order to obtain more benefit in mechanisms as well as in clinical data on acute coronary events.

With all my best wishes for the future of the Thrombosis Working Group and my best personal regards.

Sincerely Yours,

Pr. Mireille BROCHIER

From Freek WA Verheugt – Chairman 1992-1994



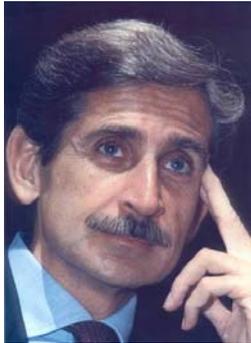
In 1980, when the European Congress of Cardiology was held in Paris (I think this was the 8th European Congress of Cardiology), I presented my first scientific abstract *Intracoronary platelet releases in patients with and without coronary artery disease*, co-authored by Patrick Serruys. At the time I did not know the presence of any Working Group of the European Society. I was still in training for cardiology in Rotterdam. In 1984, when the 9th European Congress of Cardiology was held in Dusseldorf, I returned to Amsterdam after a year of clinical research in platelet scintigraphy and ventricular thrombosis (University Medical Center Denver, Colorado -USA).

My boss in Amsterdam advised me to join one of the Working Groups of the European Society of Cardiology. In 1988 the European Congress of Cardiology became a yearly occasion. There, I visited for the first time of my life the Business Meeting of the Working Group on Thrombosis and Platelets chaired by Mireille Brochier. Paul Hugenholtz, the godfather of the European Society of Cardiology and my former boss in Rotterdam, strongly advised me to join the Working Group, “since they were too many internists and too few cardiologists”. Also the visibility of the Working Group during the European Congresses of Cardiology was not very impressive either. Ever since, I joined the Business Meetings of our Working Group and put forward proposals for symposia.

Mireille Brochier with her charisma was a great chairperson of our Working Group. She made the Working Group more attractive for cardiologists, and her successor Colin Prentice did the same. By then, the Working Group consisted of only 30 to 40 members. When I took over office, we tried to expand the membership, which in fact succeeded during the chairmanship of De Caterina. Ever since the Working Group is involved in the European Training Program and in the Atherothrombosis symposia. Both are successful initiatives and the visibility of the Working Group at the European Congresses has been dramatically improved.

Freek W.A. Verheugt, FESC
Chairman 1992 -1994

From Carlo Patrono – Chairman 1994-1996



When I joined the Working Group in 1992, it was small and run in a very informal way with the new Co-Chairman being selected by the incoming Chairman as a matter of personal choice. Thus, at the 1992 ESC Congress I was asked by Freek Verheugt to co-chair the Working Group during his two-year chairmanship. We had a fruitful interaction, though our input was largely limited to putting forward proposals for the next ESC Congress. I guess the reason I was asked was related to the decision made by the previous chairpersons (all clinical cardiologists or clinicians interested in vascular medicine) to alternate a clinical cardiologist with a basic scientist interested in platelets and platelet pathophysiology & pharmacology. This has become a tradition ever since.

At the time, I had left my job at Farmitalia Carlo Erba in Milan and had moved to the Chair of Pharmacology at the University of Chieti “G. d’Annunzio” School of Medicine. When my turn came of becoming chairman of the Working Group, in the summer of 1994, I decided to talk to John Martin. He was then visiting Rome on a regular basis, because of a scientific collaboration with Attilio Maseri. Thus, we met in Rome and had a drink in Piazza Navona sitting on the sunny side of the Piazza at a small enoteca. John was enthused with the idea of working as a team in reshaping the modus vivendi of our Working Group. Together, we decided to pursue the following agenda: 1. to increase the size of the Working Group by promoting new initiatives; 2. to establish a Nucleus of 5-6 people to manage the various activities; 3. to have a formal election by the membership of potential candidates to the Nucleus. By the time John Martin took over as chairman in 1996, the membership had grown from about 30 to over 100 members and a number of important people (for the future life of the Working Group) had been elected to become members of the Nucleus, including Des Fitzgerald, Raffaele De Caterina and Lina Badimon, who then went on to become chairpersons over the next six years.

During our tenure, John and I tried hard to convince the ESC Board to allocate more resources to the Working Groups and less to cleaning the Heart House! And things have moved in the right direction during the last 6 years or so, largely thanks to the increasingly successful involvement of John in ESC policy. On a personal note, whatever story John tells about the two of us ending up in the Emergency Room of the Karolinska Hospital in the summer of 1997, it was me who paid the hospital admission ticket in Swedish crowns (British Professors do not usually carry local currency) while John was telling the admission lady that he was a Professor of Cardiology who knew all about how he should be treated. And the rest is history...

Carlo Patrono, FESC
Professor of Pharmacology
University of Rome “La Sapienza”
Rome, Italy

From John F. Martin - 1996-1998



The Working Group on Thrombosis has always been a source not only of good science and friendship, but also of life experiences. I recall a meeting in Florence which could only be accessed through British Airways via Pisa. We had taken the train from Florence to Pisa and had time to spare before the plane left, so a group of thrombosis experts decided to have a look at the Leaning Tower. We calculated that we only needed an hour to get from Pisa to the airport before our plane left. However, when the time came to leave we couldn't find a taxi anywhere. It was lunch time and the whole of Pisa was deserted. We first became a little worried and then as we toured the streets we realised that we might be in great difficulty. Eventually, we were running from street to street looking for a taxi. Everyone assured us that this was an impossibility at lunchtime. Eventually, with little time to spare, we came across an elegant carriage drawn by a horse which was used to take tourists around Pisa at a very slow pace. We explained our predicament to the driver, who said he would do his best to get us to the airport depending on what fee was negotiated. This was done rapidly since we only had half an hour to go before our plane left. We jumped in the carriage and off we went at a gallup, leaving the town and heading towards the airport. We arrived 15 minutes before the plane left, the horse covered in lather. We jumped from the carriage with our bags to the amazement of other passengers and officials. However, never let it be said that anybody in the Thrombosis Working Group ever missed a plane, which of course we got with minutes to spare.

A more dramatic memory is from a meeting in Stockholm when I was sharing a hotel with Carlo Patrono, a venerable and very ancient member of the working group. As you will know, Carlo is one of the world's experts on aspirin and has written extensively on the dosage. At that time I suffered occasionally from paroxysmal atrial fibrillation and was very distressed to find myself going into AF following two cold beers and having run up five flights of stairs in the hotel. I immediately went to my room and phoned Carlo for help. A couple of moments later, he came to my room. I explained the situation and my history that this had happened occasionally before and that it had happened now, how I was very concerned about getting some treatment in Stockholm and that I had taken 600 mgs of aspirin while waiting for him. In his cool, calm patrician manner his only comment was, "too much". Carlo organised a taxi to take me to the Karolinska Hospital for a DC electroconversion. Once we found the casualty department we were not allowed in unless we paid a fee. I had no money in my pocket and they wouldn't take my credit card. However, Carlo saved the day by lending me a large amount of Swedish Kroner. I think that I have never paid him back. He actually stayed with me for a while as a series of doctors came in to look at me before telephoning higher command. A very attractive young female endocrinologist said that she was the appropriate doctor on duty and she had spoken to the chief of cardiology about what should be done. She put up an i.v. infusion of Sotolol. After a while this made me very disinhibited and I began telling Carlo about details of my life and apparently I ended with an in-depth appreciation of my feelings for the endocrinologist. However, the story ended well, I had a DC conversion in the morning (200 jules) and was able to give my talk at the meeting at 2pm that afternoon.

From Desmond Fitzgerald – Chairman 1998-2000



It was Carlo Patrono who asked me to join the Working Group (yes, it was his fault) and subsequently the Nucleus, soon as Co-Chairman. I remember it was in Birmingham and I was commuting from London, as were many delegates. This was my initiation into the European Society of Cardiology and those memorable Congresses at the end of summer. On assuming the Chairmanship, the working group was relatively small but under the guiding hand of Raffaele De Caterina as Co-Chair, the membership expanded markedly, bringing new blood into the group. To encourage greater participation, we established a Fellowship in Coronary Thrombosis, in which young scientists could compete for 2 years of funding, providing time away from clinical responsibilities to perform basic or clinical research. This was supported by an unrestricted grant from Merck and Company, who also supported a Young Investigator Award in Thrombosis, which still runs today.

Another development was Atherothrombosis 2000, a scientific meeting that was held in Lisbon. We had planned to have Fado, Portuguese folk singing centred on the loss of lovers and family, that makes Irish ballads seem quite cheerful in comparison. This was cancelled in favour of a family of dancers with occasional (and alarming) leaps, clashes of clubs and tossing about of children. Having expressed severe disappointment, the organisers (the team of Denise Bottiglieri) hunted down one of the most talented Fado singer straight from another venue, to bring the meeting to a wonderful conclusion. The Atherothrombosis meeting has been repeated under the Chairmanship of Lina Badimon and continues to act as a forum for those interested in thrombosis and platelets to present their work in a small group setting.

What I remember most are the Nucleus Meetings, held in London, Pisa and Dublin, when we dreamed up new ways of building the Working Group within the ESC. Perhaps the ESC was aware of these efforts, perhaps not, but I very much appreciated the dedication of the members of the Nucleus. I will also remember the training courses ably established and continued by Steen and Raffaele in Nice. These are key to translating the knowledge developed in research to clinical practice, in helping young cardiologists to appreciate how fundamental knowledge of disease mechanisms impacts in a practical way on the management of patients. Actually, truth be told, they were also great fun for speakers and audience. I remember John Martin's talk on platelets, delivered with much passion and few slides, always the way of a good lecture (never confound a good story with data!).

The Working Group continues to develop through the hard work of new members and continued support of those who lead so many of the initiatives. We all brought different skills, of influence and persuasion, of humour and charm, of innovation and invention, of clear vision and insight. Perhaps most of all we believe very much in what we do, as scientists, clinicians and teachers. Or maybe 200 joules now and again just gives us that little extra buzz.

Desmond Fitzgerald

From Raffaele De Caterina – Chairman 2000-2002



My memories of the Working Group on Thrombosis are deeply intertwined with those of the European Society of Cardiology 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 WA 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 WG, under the Chairmanship of John F. Martin, and I acted as Secretary-Treasurer of the WG. 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 WG 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 WG, 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 WG 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 WA 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 WG. We were able to continue all activities formerly started, including the Thrombosis Award and the biannual fellowship. The second extramural scientific meeting of the WG, 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 WG 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 WG on Thrombosis increased its membership to 152 members as of February 2002. It is not a huge WG, 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.

From Dalby Steen Kristensen – Chairman 2004-2006



In the years 1986-1987 I was working as a research fellow in the laboratory of John Martin in London. Our work on big platelets and my meeting with John was not only scientifically very rewarding, but John also managed to make me a true "European". John woke my interest for European collaboration in research and cardiology.

Soon after I met Raffaele De Caterina, Pisa and we started a scientific collaboration including organization of courses on antithrombotic therapy in the European Training Programme, chaired at that time by Kristian Thygesen.

I became a member of the Working Group Thrombosis and was lucky to get elected for the Nucleus. The Nucleus was at that time chaired by Desmond Fitzgerald, and I remember very nice Nucleus meetings held in Dublin with an impressive university and interesting Irish pubs. This was the start of a series of very important and entertaining Nucleus meetings over the next years. I will remember how Raffaele managed to get us inside the Leaning Tower of Pisa and took us to the home of Guisepppe Puccini and the next meeting organized by Lina Badimon in Barcelona, where the new institute in the old Saint-Pau hospital really impressed me, with its stringent modern architecture mixed with medieval buildings including a small church, where the nucleus meeting took place.

I was not as successful as Desmond Fitzgerald as Secretary-Treasurer in raising money for the Working Group, but was happy that I made it to become Vice-Chair and later on Chairperson. During my Chairmanship we had new members and an expansion of the Nucleus with Gabriel Steg, Paris, Harald Arnesen, Oslo and Dietrich Gulba, Dürren. I had excellent support from the Vice-Chair Kurt Huber, Vienna and the Secretary-Treasurer Felicita Andreotti, Rome and I think we managed to build up a strong Nucleus. I was delighted that our Nucleus-member Keith Fox, Edinburgh accepted to take the Secretary-Treasurer post in the next turn. Our major aim was to expand the Working Group to more than 200 members, and we were successful in achieving this goal by accepting 35 excellent and active new members from all over Europe. Another goal was to establish regular annual meetings/congresses. The brands 'EuroThrombosis Science' and 'EuroThrombosis Summit' were launched and we planned annual meetings with smaller basic science meetings alternating with larger more clinical orientated meetings.

During my Chairmanship I tried to establish a stronger link between our Working Group and the ESC Board and organization. President Michael Tendera and Vice-President Roberto Ferrari (in charge of WG and Associations) supported our work and the almost daily interaction with the staff in the Heart House and in particular the help from Barbara Lefevre was of great value and stimulated my interest for the ESC work in general.

I managed to show the Nucleus and the Working Group part of Denmark with Nucleus meetings being held in my home town of Aarhus and in Copenhagen, and with the Eurothrombosis Science Meeting 2006 taking place in Ebeltoft in a modern Danish Hotel located by the sea. This meeting was devoted to the theme of 'Platelets and Thrombosis' and

was organized by Torben B. Larsen, Lars H. Rasmussen and myself. During the talks we could hear the noise from the sea and I could almost feel the waves slashing towards the balcony of the auditorium. The presentations and the discussion were very fruitful – several younger investigators from all over Europe attended the meeting and important new networks for platelet research were established.

For me the membership of the Working Group Thrombosis has been a great experience and has helped me to establish scientific network in several European countries. At least as important, the work has given me a lot of fun and pleasure. Several of the WG members are now my very best friends and I hope to be able to continue my work in WG Thrombosis for many years.

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