Foreword

Innsbruck, Austria, had been the host of the 13th World Congress of the International Photodynamic Association (IPA) 10-14 May 2011, in association with the 3rd International Congress of the European Platform of Photodynamic Medicine (EPPM) and 2nd Congress of the Head & Neck Optical Diagnosis Society (HNODS). Over 379 registered participants from 52 nations delivering over 300 papers covered all fields of photodynamic applications.

At the opening, congress president Herwig Kostron (Department of Neurosurgery, Innsbruck, Austria) addressed very clearly that Photodynamic Therapy and Fluorescence Diagnosis have proven to be efficient in clinical settings but haven’t made their way to clinical routine. Like never before the need for clinical studies, ongoing research and an “umbrella organisation” like the IPA has been emphasized. This 13th world congress underlined already a “small” umbrella function as the 3rd International Congress of EPPM and 2nd HNODS were associated.

The spectrum of PDT was reflected in 9 excellent plenary lectures, leading from clinical overview (S Bown) focusing then on targeted therapy (T Hasan) and the overview on lifetime imaging (FLIM) and its spectral resolved variant (SLIM) (A Rück). Other sessions were dedicated to mechanisms of PDT (B. Krammer), immunology (T. Hasan), novel sensitizers (R. Pandey), physics and dosimetry (B. Wilson) and drug delivery techniques with Nano-PDT (D. Russell).

One speciality in which PDT has made its way into clinical routine is Dermatology highlighted by A. Sidoroff. JC. Kennedy was awarded the honorary medal of the IPA for the introduction of a topically applicable sensitizer (precursor).

From the many excellent presentations just a few topics can be highlighted within this context: The clinical applications of PDT in dermatology (Q. Peng, A. Sidoroff), neurosurgery (S. Eljamel), ENT/head and neck-cancer (C. Hopper), urology (P. Jichlinsky), gynaecology (P. Hillemanns), pulmonary and thoracic cancer (H. Kato), gastroenterology (S. Bown) and veterinary medicine (H. Walt) were addressed in various focussed sessions and plenary lectures – all with a very realistic approach to what PDT/FD can do and what steps have to be taken to promote these techniques (P. Berlien, A. Sieron). A thrilling field is the combination of photodynamic mechanisms and nanotechnology that might revolutionize targeted therapy in medicine which was covered in the session headed by D. Russel and R. Kopelman.

Among the non oncological indications the antimicrobial PDT_bears incredible vast field of potential applications (G. Jori, M. Hamblin). They go far beyond clini-
cal use like the treatment of infected leg ulcers or ventilator associated pneumonia. Eradicating water born diseases (Malaria) or disinfection of surfaces (hospital furniture or bottles for beverages) are just a few of the ongoing projects. Malaria and water disinfection will have even a wider application than the oncological field already in the near future.

The last day was dedicated to clinical session: “From evidence to clinical consensus” (S. Bown) covering all clinical fields with a presentation of published facts. This included also a telephone conference with R Wong from NIH/NCI.

We already have many good and convincing results but too few evidenced based results and too many anecdotal reports. The future of clinical PDT will be determined through its acceptance by the general body of the medical profession as a valid treatment method which could be used as an alternative to, or in combination with, existing standard therapies. Its inclusion within the main stream therapeutic modalities, with expansion of its indications in a range of neoplastic and other conditions is mandatory. The role of IPA in the near future will be the coordination for RTC, to get the absolute necessary results in whatever indication to convince industry and regulatory bodies. Furthermore the socio economical aspects of PDT have to be more emphasized and communicated to the health authorities.

The closing remarks of the congress president H. Kostron emphasized that PDT has shown to be highly effective and helpful in treating patients – now is the time that these facts have to “step out of the shadow” and reach clinical routine. In an atmosphere of friendship, collaboration and common interests rather than competition, forces can be united to achieve this goal. The IPA is the perfect platform for this.

Herwig Kostron,
President of the 13th IPA Congress, Innsbruck
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