

Meeting News

4th EADV Spring Symposium 9–12 February 2006, Saariselkä, Lapland, Finland

Sirkku Peltonen

Dept of Dermatology, University of Turku, PO Box 52, FI-20521 Turku, Finland.

E-mail: sirkku.peltonen@tyks.fi

The “spring” symposium of the European Academy of Dermatology and Venereology (EADV) was held in the Saariselkä fell village in Lapland in February. The theme of the symposium, *Skin and Climate*, was highly appropriate to the local conditions of ice, snow and cheek-biting chill. However, despite the cold weather, the atmosphere of the meeting was warm and enjoyable, thanks to the wholehearted commitment of the organizing committee, directed by *Dr Raimo Suhonen*, and the scientific committee, chaired by *Professor Aarne Oikarinen*. Approximately 1000 participants, many of whom came from the more moderate climates of Southern Europe, enjoyed the area and the high-quality meeting program. For many participants, being in the village must have been an unusual experience in itself, with colleagues walking from one meeting room to another in snowmobile overalls.

The keynote lecture, given by *Professor Jouni Uitto* from Philadelphia, USA, was entitled *Molecular biology of the skin at the genome/environment interface: the paradigm of photoaging*. Jouni Uitto was born in Helsinki,



Fig. 1. EADV Board in Saariselkä meeting. (Photo M Rikkonen)

Finland, where he went to school and completed his MD and PhD degrees. In spite of his international character he still enjoys visiting his home country. His lecture divided cutaneous aging into two distinct components: innate aging and photoaging. In skin there is a balance between the rates of biosynthesis and degradation of the principal extracellular matrix components, the collagens and the elastic fibres. In photoaging, the degradation of collagen and elastic fibres is markedly accelerated through activation of the proteolytic enzymes. In aging skin, collagen biosynthesis remains low, while elastin biosynthesis is simultaneously increased. However, the newly synthesized elastic structures do not morphologically assemble into functional elastic fibres. Instead, non-functional elastic fibres accumulate. As a consequence of these changes, skin becomes loose and saggy with reduced elasticity.

The other plenary sessions included six topics. First, the President of the EADV, *Professor Johannes Ring* from Munich, Germany, gave a talk on various backgrounds of atopic eczema, entitled: *New aspects in pathophysiology and management of atopic eczema*. He discussed the role of genetics, the epidermal barrier, stress and other psychosocial factors, and the tendency to form IgE antibodies as causative factors in atopic dermatitis. He also emphasized the role of the multidisciplinary team in the treatment of these patients.

Another cosmopolitan speaker with Finnish origins, *Professor Leena Bruckner-Tuderman* from Freiburg, Germany, gave a clear and informative talk entitled *Modern standards in diagnosis and management of bullous diseases*. Since the structure of the dermal–epidermal junction zone is now well known, precise diagnosis



Fig. 2. Opening session of the meeting. On the first row Sakari Reitamo, Secretary General of the Meeting Johanna Höök-Nikanne, President of the EADV Johannes Ring, Governor Hannele Pokka, Chairman of the Organising Committee Raimo Suhonen, Treasurer of the EADV, Jon Olafsson with his wife. (Photo M Rikkonen)

and follow-up of the different bullous diseases has become possible. In the case of autoimmune diseases of the pemphigoid and pemphigus groups, determination of the autoantigens and their immunodominant epitopes is achieved using a combination of immunofluorescent staining, enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay (ELISA) and immunoblot assays with recombinant antigens. In her lecture Professor Bruckner-Tuderman reminded the audience of the importance of exclusion of tumours behind the autoimmune blistering disease. She also introduced the fact that these diseases do not show spontaneous remission. Thus, therapy is always required, starting at a sufficiently high dose that can gradually be lowered. Standardized diagnostic procedures form an essential basis for monitoring therapeutic strategies and developing biologically valid therapies for autoimmune blistering disorders and

promising perspectives for targeted molecular therapies.

Dr Christopher Griffiths from Manchester, UK, gave a lecture entitled *Modern management of psoriasis*. He emphasized the role of the psychological component in the management of psoriasis. The immense psycho-

social burden suffered by patients with psoriasis has to be taken into consideration when planning therapies. Specifically, anxiety and worry in patients predicts non-clearance of psoriasis in the course of treatment. Each patient's psoriasis and requirements from treatment are different and management should, if possible, be personalised.

Professor Emanuel Kuflik from Newark, New Jersey, USA, has more than three decades of experience in cryosurgery. He talked on cryosurgery in several sessions and showed numerous pictures to demonstrate how this technique can be used on various benign and malignant lesions, and on surgically demanding areas such as eyelids. He made a clear distinction between treatments of benign and malignant lesions. He treated benign lesions with a very short (e.g. 4 seconds) spray of liquid nitrogen, while basal cell carcinomas were given in more than 10 times longer treatments. In addition, *Professor Georg Stingl* from Vienna, Austria,



Fig. 3. Congress delegates on reindeer tour.

gave an overview on the topic *What's new in dermatological therapy*, and Professor Giampiero Girolomoni from Rome, Italy, introduced *What's new in dermatological research*.

In addition to the plenary sessions, the meeting comprised 12 workshops and 13 symposia. Thus there were several concurrent sessions. One had to choose between interesting sessions in the hope that the same topics will be presented in forthcoming meetings. The most apt topic for this meeting was probably the session on Arctic dermatology, with most presentations from Scandinavia. Eero Lehmuskallio showed his data demonstrating that, in cold weather, the use of emollients increases the risk of facial frostbite. A false sensation of safety probably forms the principal mechanism for this risk. When there

is a real risk of injury from cold we should thus avoid the use of cosmetic emollients. Among the case presentations from Finland, Rafael Pasternack from Tampere showed what happens if the sauna is too hot. Winter swimmers who visited a sauna heated to over 130°C developed reticulate pigmentation in areas exposed to the heat. The pigmentation resembled *erythema ab igne*, both clinically and histologically.

The meeting also included several sessions on skin cancers. Dermatologists now have many treatment options for precancerous lesions as well as basal cell carcinomas. The session on Non-surgical treatment of skin cancer included talks on cryosurgery, photodynamic therapy and medical treatments. It presented an overview of the topic and left the

impression that the treatments are most effective when they are performed by experts. To become an expert one has to practise and study theory. The importance of reading became evident in a plenary session in which the audience was equipped with an interactive device. The Dolphin Interactive polling system enabled Professor Emanuel Kuflik to test the knowledge of the audience on cryosurgery. Most of the dermatologists stated that they used cryosurgery. However, a much smaller number knew what cell type in skin is most vulnerable in cryosurgery. This example emphasizes the importance of continuous education on our field. This symposium met our educational needs very well, in addition to offering an excellent opportunity to meet colleagues in an interesting and exotic location.