

## Nordic Congress in Trondheim Confirms the Strength of Nordic Cooperation

With excellent scientific presentations, more participants than ever expected and nothing but positive feedback, we call the 33<sup>rd</sup> Nordic Congress of Dermatology and Venereology in Trondheim in April a Nordic success.

The Nordic Congresses of Dermatology and Venereology have a long history. Established in 1910, the line of Nordic Congresses is long, with the 33<sup>rd</sup> Nordic Congress held in Trondheim, Norway on April 27–29, 2016.

The congress was a 3-day meeting, starting with luncheon on Wednesday and ending with luncheon on Friday, with 7 keynote lectures, 10 sessions on special topics and a congress dinner. As a gift from the hosting society, the Norwegian Society of Dermatology and Venereology, an organ recital with world-class amateur organist (and dermatologist) Guttorm Guleng was held in the Nidaros Cathedral on Thursday afternoon, adding a sense of historic, spiritual and musical atmosphere to the congress.

### Melanoma and skin barrier

On Wednesday, the first keynote speaker, *Per Helsing* (Oslo), presented new epidemiological data on malignant melanoma in Nor-

way. Unfortunately, Norway has high melanoma incidence and mortality rates. Helsing's data suggest that this to a large degree is caused by late diagnoses of nodular melanomas, especially in older men. The following session on melanoma included presentations on screening and awareness campaigns, dermatoscopy of pigmented lesions and targeted therapy in advanced melanoma, as well as a case presentation of an aggressive melanoma developing from a congenital naevus in an infant.

In the next keynote lecture, *Tove Agner* (Copenhagen) gave an excellent overview on skin barrier function, relevant for all practicing dermatologists. Both filaggrin deficiency, inflammation and the cutaneous microbiome contribute to the compromised

skin barrier in atopic eczema and other skin diseases. Her talk was a nice introduction to the session on contact dermatitis, which ended with a lecture on contact allergy by *Magnus Bruze* (Malmö), drawing on his life-long experience in the field.

### Ethics, STIs and skin cancer

On Thursday morning, visiting keynote speaker *Magne Nylenna* (Oslo), director of the Norwegian Kunnskapscenteret for helsetjenesten and a former Editor-in-Chief of *Tidsskrift for Den*

*norske legeforening*, gave a thought-provoking and challenging presentation on fraud and misconduct in medical science. He emphasized that there is no distinct border between ethical and non-ethical behaviour in science. He questioned the present academic system of reward and merit and promoted the idea of a more healthy culture of transparency and ethics.



Then followed 4 parallel sessions on hidradenitis suppurativa, patient education and teaching, skin cancer treatment and sexually transmitted infections, with speakers from all 5 Nordic countries. All 4 sessions were well attended with interesting presentations and nice dialogues between speakers, chairs and audiences.

The keynote speaker from Finland was *Eija Hiltunen-Back* (Helsinki), who gave an update on “old” sexual transmitted infections, primarily syphilis, presently having a “come-back” in many countries. She emphasized the need for strict national and international surveillance programs to monitor such diseases in times of increased travels and emigration. Next

followed two parallel sessions of free communications from Sweden, Denmark, Finland and Norway. It was encouraging to listen to excellent scientific presentations by so many young and up-coming Nordic dermatologists.

Visiting keynote speaker *Hywel Williams* (Nottingham) was a main attraction of the congress. Being a world authority on atopic eczema and evidence-based medicine, he spoke on how to reduce avoidable waste in eczema research. Research should answer questions relevant for clinicians and patients, should avoid bias, and should publish both negative and positive findings. Interventions and outcomes should be explained in a useable way. The following session on atopic eczema included presentations on possible preventive interventions, diabetes as a co-morbidity and treatment with biologic drugs.

Friday morning started with the general assembly of the Nordic Dermatology Association (NDA), followed by a presentation by visiting keynote speaker *Günther Hofbauer* (Zürich). With his long clinical and scientific experience, he was able to explain in a very pedagogical manner the intricate ways in which immunosuppressive drugs and other factors contribute to the increased risk of skin cancer after organ transplantation.

The last session, on psoriasis, included presentations on genetics, mast cells, prevalence, weight reduction and topical treatment, ending with the seventh and last keynote presentation, by *Mona Ståhle* (Stockholm), who gave an excellent update on up-coming biologic drugs in the treatment of psoriasis. Improved understanding of the pathogenesis of psoriasis goes hand-in-hand with the development of new drugs targeting specific pathways of disease. These are exciting times for dermatologists treating patients with psoriasis.

The congress had a record-high number of posters. We especially appreciated the many poster and oral presentations from Finland. We expected around 200 congress participants, but ended up with more than 350, about the same number as the Nordic congress in Tampere in 2013, but with a lot more participants from the non-hosting countries.

## A joint project

We thank the NDA board for giving us the opportunity to host the congress, as well as all committee members, session chairs and invited speakers from all Nordic countries for their contributions. This was truly a cooperative project. The support from our sponsors, mostly pharmaceutical companies with products related to dermatology, is highly appreciated.

We thank Øivind Lie and his co-workers at Congress-Conference Norway, our technical organizers, who promptly and efficiently acted when the congress was on the verge of cancellation due to a strike among Norwegian hotel workers, closing the hotel at which the congress was to be held. With excellent meeting facilities, first-class food and professional service at the Scandic Hell Hotel close to the airport, the change of congress venue 72 h before the congress was about to start, turned out to be very positive.

## The Nordic idea is alive and kicking

With other scientific congresses, such as the EADV and AAD, and smaller meetings devoted to more specific topics becoming increasingly more popular among Nordic dermatologists, many have questioned the need for Nordic congresses in our specialty.

We think differently. To us, the congress in Trondheim proves that the concept of Nordic dermatology (and venereology) is alive and kicking. The Nordic countries share common history, culture and way of thinking. All Nordic countries benefit from more Nordic relations, more Nordic contacts and more Nordic cooperation. We are stronger together. That is why we need a Nordic Dermatology Association and regular Nordic Congresses of Dermatology and Venereology, supplementing other organizations and meetings.

The next Nordic congress will be held in Gothenburg in 2019. We are confident that John Paoli, the congress president, and his co-workers, will organize an excellent Nordic congress.



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