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Muscle news from around the world

Report on the 3rd annual scientific meeting of the Asian and Oceanian myology center, Singapore 2004

The Asian and Oceanian Myology Center (AOMC) was inaugurated in Tokyo in January 2001. It was intended that the AOMC be modelled on the European Neuromuscular Centre with its main aims being to promote basic and clinical scientific research, to provide a scientific forum to advance and distribute knowledge for the benefit of patients, to provide educational opportunities for young investigators and clinicians and to promote the achievement of standards in clinical practice in the field of myology and other neuromuscular disorders in the Asian and Oceanian region.

The 3rd annual scientific meeting of the (AOMC) was held in Singapore on January 8–9 2004. The meeting was organised by Dr W.C. Yee and his colleagues and was held at the National Neuroscience Institute. One hundred and sixty-eight delegates from 13 countries in the Asian and Oceanian region, together with seven participants from Europe, Turkey and the US attended the meeting.

There were two symposia, 'Duchenne muscular dystrophy—new and future therapy' and 'Advances in glycogen storage diseases'. In addition 56 free platform and poster presentations were given. There was also a lively Clinical–Pathological case conference composed of consultational and teaching cases, chaired by Prof. F. Mastaglia with Profs X. Dennett, B. Kakulas and I. Nonaka in the expert panel, discussing cases and biopsies presented by delegates from several Asian and Oceanian countries.

Prof. E. Ozawa opened the Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy symposium with a paper on the molecular basis of therapy. This was followed by presentations by Dr S. Takeda on Gene Therapy, Dr R. Kapsa on Corrective Gene Conversion, two papers on Antisense Oligonucleotide Therapy by Dr S. Wilton and Prof. M. Matsuo, a review of Pharmacological Therapy by Dr A. Kornberg and a paper on Cardiopulmonary Care in Japan by Dr Ishihara. The symposium on Glycogen Storage Diseases was opened by Dr H. Sugie who presented an Overview, including a diagnostic approach. This was followed by presentations by Dr N. Raben on Molecular Genetics and Therapy in Glycogen Storage Disease type 2, Prof. J. Howell on Gene Therapy in the Ovine Model of Mc Ardle's Disease and by Dr I. Nishino on Danon Disease.

The free oral presentations included papers on the experience of the European Neuromuscular Centre given by Dr A. Urtizberea, two papers on Stretch Activated Channels in mdx mice by Drs E. Yeung and D. Allen, Chloride Channels by Dr A. Bretag, Negamycin Therapy in mdx Mice by Dr R. Matsuda, Optimising Design of Antisense Oligonuceotides for Exon Skipping in DMD by Dr D. Pramono, Sleep Disordered Breathing in DMD by Dr A. Lissoni, Sarcoglycan Mutations and the Assembly of the Sarcoglycan Complex by Dr Y.M. Chan, Vertebrate Slow Twitch Muscle Fibre Identity specification by Blimp-1 on Hedgehog Signalling by Dr S. Roy and Polymorphisms of HLA-DRB1 in Chinese Childhood-Onset Myasthenia Gravis by Dr C.B. Zhao.

The fourth AOMC annual scientific meeting will be held in Kaohsiung, Taiwan on 3–4 March 2005. Further details may be obtained from Dr W.C. Yee, Secretary, AOMC (woon_chee_yee@nni.com.sg) or Prof. Y.J. Jong (yjjong@cc.kmu.edu.tw).

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Gaetano Conte prizes 2004 awarded at Ephesus

Frank Lehmann-Horn, Georges Karpati, Corrado Angelini, Jane Miller, and Feza Deymeer received myology prizes awarded by the Neapolitan Academy

The Seventh Congress of the Mediterranean Society of Myology (MSM) took place 27–30 May 2004 at the Sürmeli Hotel near the historic town of Ephesus in Turkey. On this occasion, the Gaetano-Conte Academy of Naples, engaged in the support of research into cross-striated muscle, awarded its prizes for the seventh time.

Who was this Gaetano Conte, after whom Academy and Prize are named? Gaetano Conte (1798–1858) was a 19th-

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century physician who practised in the vicinity of Naples. As early as 1836 he reported to the Annals of the *Ospedale degl'Incurabili di Napoli* on two brothers with a so far unknown kind of muscular paralysis [1], a condition that, a quarter of a century later, was systematically studied by the British physician Edward Meryon (1807–1880) [2]. Somewhat later, 1868, Guillaume Amand Duchenne de Boulogne (1806–1875), then practising at the Hôpital de la Salpêtrière of Paris, described the disease as 'pseudo-hypertrophic' muscular paralysis [3]. Finally, in 1891 the internist Wilhelm Erb [4] of Heidelberg distinguished this entity from other cases of juvenile paralysis by calling it a 'progressive muscular dystrophy'. History has assigned the name of Duchenne to this most common and most severe form of muscular dystrophy that is characterised by X-chromosomal recessive inheritance. Alan and Marcia Emery [5] have written a commendable monograph on the history of this disease with special emphasis on the question as to what extent these predecessors (also G. Conte was not the very first) should be considered as 'the discoverer'.

For a long time the achievements of these forerunners had been forgotten even by experts in the history of medicine. In the case of G. Conte, it was the cardiologist Giovanni Nigro who retrieved the memory of his great Neapolitan fellow countryman. He reprinted the paper of 1836 in facsimile [6] after he had founded the Academy in 1981 and, the year after, endowed the prize, which henceforth should keep alive the remembrance of 'the Italian discoverer of Duchenne muscular dystrophy'.

The prize is regularly awarded in three classes, i.e. for basic research, for clinical research, and for social achievement in the field of neuromuscular disorders. Occasionally, an 'extra prize' has also been awarded as required, subject to the classification of the awardee.

The award consists of a gold medal and the sum of 1000 Euro. In the class of basic research, famous relevant winners of former years are *Lou Kunkel* and *Eric Hoffman*, discoverers of the dystrophin gene and its product, dystrophin, respectively. As distinguished former prize winners in the class of clinical research one might mention *Lord Walton of Detchant*, protagonist of research into Duchenne muscular dystrophy in the pre-molecular era and long-standing President of the World Federation of Neurology; *Victor Dubowitz*, editor of Neuromuscular Disorders, president of the World Muscle Society, who tracked down the original publication of Conte and Gioja in the famous reading room of the British museum in 1959, and brought it to the attention of Giovanni Nigro; *Alan Emery*, who first described Emery-Dreifuss muscular dystrophy and who, after his retirement, shaped the European Centre of Neuromuscular Disorders (ENMC); and *Andrew Engel*, the universal discoverer in the field of the myopathies and editor of the two most comprehensive volumes on *Myology*. *Ysbrand Poortman*, founder of many patients' self-help groups, amongst them the European Alliance of Muscular Disorders Associations (EAMDA), is probably the best known prize winner in the class for social achievements.

For the actual award ceremony the historical town of Ephesus had been chosen. Situated among the ancient ruins with the magnificent backdrop of the illuminated antique amphitheatre, the laudations for the new price winners were read. In the class of basic research: Frank Lehmann-Horn, physiologist from Ulm; in the class of clinical research: the neurologists George Karpati from Montréal, and Corrado Angelini from Padova. Organiser of the current MSM Congress, Feza Deymeer from Istanbul, was decorated with the Extra Prize; and Jane Miller, editorial assistant (and 'manager-in-chief') of the Journal *Neuromuscular Disorders* received the award in the class for Social achievements. The prize winners were invited to lecture during the closing session.

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