

Meeting News

100 Year Anniversary of the Swedish Society for Dermatology and Venereology

At the Annual Meeting of the Swedish Society for Dermatology and Venereology (SSDV) in Stockholm on May 17-19, 2001 the Society celebrated its foundation 100 years ago, in October 1901. The meeting took place at Norra Latin School in the very centre of Stockholm. This old *gymnasium* has been restored and is nowadays a popular place for conferences. The meeting, arranged by dermatologists at Huddinge Hospital, one of Stockholm's university hospitals, attracted close to 250 dermatologists. Huddinge is well known for its many research activities, for which it belongs to the Karolinska Institute. In charge of the whole affair was Peter Lidbrink and, indeed, he and his collaborators were very successful!

When registering, all participants received a highly appreciated gift, the book "*Swedish Dermato-Venereology*", with the subtitle "Some Glimpses of

the Society's History on the Occasion of Its Centenary", written by Professor Nils Thyresson, the doyen of Swedish dermato-venereology. We are all deeply grateful to Nils Thyresson who has produced a most valuable and informative book after years of hard work. It would have been an impossible task for anyone else. The book is full of interesting information about Swedish dermato-venereology during the last hundred years.

History

The first session of the meeting had the title "100 years of dermatology and venereology". Peter Lidbrink, the Chairman, opened the session by showing examples of the first handwritten protocols from the meetings of the Society. Historical perspectives and the development of dermatology over the past 100 years were presented by six Professor emeriti. The lecturers recalled what dermatology was like in "the good old days" and flavoured their talks with memories of interesting cases or personalities they had encountered in their clinics over the years.

Nils Thyresson, Professor in Uppsala from 1952-1968 and in Stockholm from 1968-1981, discussed skin tuberculosis. Tuberculosis has been a great health problem since ancient times, up until the first



The Chairman of the meeting: Peter Lidbrink

chemotherapeutic drugs, PAS and INH, were introduced in the 1940s. Previously erythema nodosum nearly always meant that the patient had an underlying tuberculosis. Various forms of tuberculides, caused by haematogenous dissemination of tubercle bacilli, were also common, such as erythema induratum of Bazin and papulonecrotic tuberculides, but the most dreaded form of cutaneous tuberculosis was lupus vulgaris. This disease was incurable until Niels Finsen introduced ultraviolet radiation in 1895, a discovery for which he was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1903. In Stockholm a Finsen Institute was established in 1902 but was discontinued when the tuberculostatic drugs were introduced.

Lupus vulgaris was usually caused by haematogenous dissemination to the skin but Nils Thyresson recalled some patients who developed lupus vulgaris many years after inoculation of tubercle bacilli. In 1951 it was shown that tuberculoid granulomas in the skin were not necessarily caused by tuberculosis when a new disease,



Carl-Fredrik Wahlgren examining the "Anniversary book" written by Nils Thyresson.



Professor emeriti: Ove Groth, Linköping; Nils Thyresson, Stockholm; Lennart Juhlin, Uppsala; Gerd Michaëlsson, Uppsala; Hans Rosman, Lund; and Halvor Möller, Malmö.

called swimming pool granuloma, appeared in Sweden in Örebro. The lesions contained acid-fast bacilli and appeared in patients who had visited a swimming pool contaminated with a micro-organism, which originally was named *M. balnei*, but later turned out to be identical to *M. marinum*, which was known to occur in fish.

Professor Thyresson also told us about the semantic problem that cropped up in the 1950s when the disease lupus erythematosus disseminatus was being characterised. As skin tuberculosis was very rare in the USA, the American physicians used

the term “lupus” when talking about this new disease whereas “lupus” meant lupus vulgaris to the European dermatologists.

Ove Groth, Professor in Linköping from 1970–1987, gave a talk on topical therapy before the age of cortisone and antibiotics. He quoted the Danish Professor Lomholt who said that “topical therapy is a primitive empiricism, which you have to learn by yourself”. In those days there was a plethora of preparations containing tar and sulphur, among other things, which spread a characteristic smell in the wards. The therapy was guided by the morphological picture of the skin lesions. The treatments were mainly carried out in the wards, since they were both time-consuming and required a substantial nursing staff.

Ove Groth remembered that some of the nurses, particularly “Franska Britta”, were very skilful and gave true theatrical performances when executing their treatments.

Lennart Juhlin, Professor in Uppsala from 1969–1993, discussed the treatment of urticaria. Although antihistamines were discovered in 1937 by Bovet and Staub, who worked at the Pasteur Institute in Paris, therapy using antihistamines was not available until after the Second World War, when less toxic drugs were developed. The sedative side effects were a drawback in the treatment of urticaria. The first low-sedating antihistamine, terfenadine, was introduced in the 80s and has been followed by other low- or non-sedating preparations, such as loratadin (Claritin), cetirizin (Zyrlex), fexofenadin (Telfast), and now the latest, desloratadin (Aerius). In 1994 it was shown that many cases of chronic urticaria are an auto-immune disease with auto-antibodies against IgE or its receptor, which induce a histamine release from mast cells and basophils.



Mats Bjellerup, Olle Larkö and Ylva Enström.



Erik Borglund and Ann-Marie Hedblad in the lecture hall.



Hans Rorsman chatting with Håkan Thyresson in one of the intermissions. In the background Ove Groth, Carl-Fredrik Wahlgren and Lennart Juhlin can be seen.

Hans Rorsman, Professor in Göteborg in 1972–1974 and in Lund from 1974–1995, remembered that the very first patient he met when he started his training in dermatology in Copenhagen had dermatitis herpetiformis. His colleague, Professor Haxthausen, began a treatment with sulphapyridine. When the patient returned two days later, the itching that had tormented the patient for a long time had completely disappeared!

Many years later a farmer who had been successfully treated for his dermatitis herpetiformis at the Department of Dermatology in Lund arranged to have his property donated to the department after his death. A few days after the formalities had been settled, the patient committed suicide. Hans Rorsman said: "It became evident that even though we had succeeded in treating this patient's somatic disease, we had missed his depression". The important lesson from this tragic case is that you should always try to see to the whole patient.

Gerd Michaëlsson, Professor in Uppsala in 1993–1997, discussed zinc, gluten sensitive psoriasis and pustulosis palmoplantaris. She told us about the miraculous effect of treating a patient with acrodermatitis enteropathica with zinc. This was first published as a short case report from a meeting in London (in Barnes PM, Moynahan EJ. Zinc deficiency in acrodermatitis enteropathica: Multiple dietary intolerance treated with synthetic diet. *Proc R Soc Med* 1973; 66: 327–329). This illustrates that small and preliminary case reports may indeed be very important. It is now known that nearly 300 enzymes are zinc dependent. Acrodermatitis enteropathica is the only disease caused by zinc deficiency. Otherwise there are always other causes behind the deficiency which should be identified. It is now known that even moderate zinc deficiency has negative effects. A consequence of the work with zinc in skin disease led to an awareness of the association between gluten sensitivity in both psoriasis and palmoplantar pustulosis. It is now evident that diet may improve the skin disease even if there are no endomysium/transglutami-

nase antibodies and the mucosal changes are very mild. A further consequence of the increased interest has been investigations of the pathogenesis of palmoplantar pustulosis which is now known to be localised in the eccrine duct and is probably an autoimmune disease.

Halvor Möller, Professor in Malmö from 1980–1994, described how he and his colleagues solved the aetiology of hyperpigmentation in sun-exposed skin and conjunctivae in a group of 11 patients they had many years ago. They could show a clear clinical and pathological picture of exogenous ochronosis, but since it appeared uniquely, they named it Melanosis Malmö. It turned out that the patients had been treated with metacyclin (Rondomycin) for a long time. The pathological pigment was deposited extracellularly in the actinic elastosis and consisted of a chemical complex of tetracycline-calcium-melanin. Halvor Möller finished his presentation by recalling how interesting our speciality is and how many fasci-



Professor Jouni Uitto together with Margareta Frohm. In the back Martin Bäckdahl is seen.



Mona Bäckdahl and Eija Rosenblad.

nating challenges we encounter in our daily work, motivating our common exclamation on Sunday evenings: "Monday at last"!

After this session two excellent lectures were given by Professor *Jouni Uitto* (about genodermatoses) and Dr *Alvin E. Friedman-Kein* (about viral STDs); see special articles on pages 12-15 in this issue. Associate Professor *Carola Lidén* contributed with a lecture on contact dermatology. See her summary on page 16.

The ordinary annual meeting proceedings was held by the Chairman Ove Bäck. At the end of the meeting the General Secretary of the Nordic Dermatology Association, *Torbjörn Egelrud*, gave his visions for dermatology and venereology in coming decades.

There were also special meetings arranged by the groups for occupational dermatology, skin surgery, paediatric dermatology and epidemiological dermatology.

The evening before the opening, an informal gathering with much talk and a delicious buffet took place. After the meeting a glorious gala dinner took place at the Grand Hotel, facing the water and the Royal Castle. It was a cheerful and pleasant evening which will be long remembered. Thank you again, Peter Lidbrink and colleagues!



Desiree Wiegleb-Edström and Ove Groth having a chat before the dinner.



At the end of the meeting Mona Bäckdahl handed over the SSDV standard to Mats Berg who will be responsible for the next annual meeting in Eskilstuna.



At the opening evening a buffet was served.

Our final wish is for the spirit of the enthusiasm, speed, wind and freshness reflected in this picture of sailing boats to characterise the upcoming years of Swedish dermato-venereology!

