

The European Neuroendocrine Tumor Society (ENETS)

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22–24 March 2006, Prague:

Record attendance!

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Letter from the ENETS Chairman

As I write this letter, I remember last week and how fortunate I was to be welcomed into my new role as ENETS chairman by so many of you at our 3rd Annual Conference in Prague. If you attended the meeting, you know that the number of participants was large: The final tally shows that we were 706 in attendance. And new membership applications keep coming in: at the end of March we stand at 378 members. For a scientific society dedicated to a rare illness such as neuroendocrine tumor disease, I would call this a tremendous success. Needless to say, I am optimistic about my next two years in office.

This spring 2006 issue of the ENETS Newsletter is an important one, as we consider our past events and look to the Society's future. The inside features highlights from the Prague conference. Feedback has been positive, with comments on the quality of the presentations and the conference organization. As well, participants have requested a greater focus on case presentations and more discussion of treatment and management issues. I can assure you that the Executive Committee is taking all suggestions into consideration as we get plans underway for the organization of the Barcelona 2007 meeting.

The same consideration is being given to the very fruitful discussion that took place during the Society's General Assembly meeting in Prague. Please have a look at the meeting's summary on the back page of the Newsletter. I am pleased that we could find consensus on the matter of broadening ENETS' appeal and opening membership to all medical professionals. We still have plenty of work ahead of us, though, namely the formation of an effective advisory board and task forces, as well as the development of a unified NET registry. As discussed in Prague, these months before the Barcelona conference will be significant and I welcome any and all suggestions for improving the Society.

Wouter de Herder, MD
Chairman ENETS

The 3rd Annual ENETS Conference in Prague: A Huge Variety of Encouraging Approaches

By Thomas Bisswanger-Heim, MD

With more than 700 participants, the 3rd Annual ENETS Conference in Prague attracted nearly double the number of guests who attended last year's Cracow conference. The participants in Prague represented every continent, as well as every discipline related to neuroendocrine tumor research, and the speakers included 40 experts who are at the forefront of gastroenteropancreatic NET research.

Change of Command for the Future, Honoring Past and Present Achievements

A significant event during the congress was the handing over of the ENETS' chairmanship from *Bertram Wiedenmann* of Berlin to his successor *Wouter de Herder* of Rotterdam. Both expressed optimism at the growing influence of ENETS, which currently claims about 400 members, and in further contributing to a significant improvement of diagnosis and treatment of NET patients.

Another highlight of the conference was the bestowing of the Society's annual Life Achievement Award, which was conferred in absentia on *Dame Julia M. Polak* of London, who is distinguished by her formidable merits in NET research, as well as in research on tissue engineering. *Martyn Caplin* of London presented the award to Dame Julia at her office in London in February, and she then gave a short presentation of her research and demonstrated her clear enthusiasm for the field. This presentation was filmed and shown to the conference delegates in Prague.



Wouter de Herder, MD, the new ENETS Chairman.

The conference's social program, as well, attracted many of the guests. Participants were taken on a tour through Prague and then brought to one of the city's most stunning palaces, the Žofín Palác, for a gala dinner and live music.

The Latest in NET Research: Reason for Optimism

In recent years, angiogenesis has been increasingly defined as a pivotal point of tumor biology. 'Since usually vascularization in NET is high, the identification of angiogenesis markers and angiogenesis-active compounds seems to be crucial for innovation in NET diagnosis and therapy,' said *Philippe Ruszniewski* of Clichy, France. According to the presentation of *Jean-Yves Scoazec* of Lyon, France, there is a close interaction between tumor proliferation, hypoxia and release of angiogenetic factors, such as vascular endothelial growth factor (VEGF). In many tumor entities vascularization has been shown as a parameter associated with a poor prognosis. As Scoazec pointed out, in NETs the prognostic impact of vascularization seems to depend on the tumor location. So in NETs of the foregut or pancreas, vascularization seems to indicate a prognostic advantage.

'VEGF has a key role in the induction of angiogenesis,' *James C. Yao* of Texas pointed out. For instance, possible antiproliferative effects of somatostatin analogs, as well as of interferons, are at least partially mediated by the inhibition of VEGF and an insulin-like growth factor (IGF). Yao reported on the first encouraging results with new ligands targeting VEGF and its receptors. Bevacizumab, a mononuclear antibody against VEGF-A, was evaluated in a clinical study composed of 25 patients with progressed carcinoid disease. Bevacizumab-treated patients showed a considerable reduction of tumor blood flow compared to patients treated with PEG



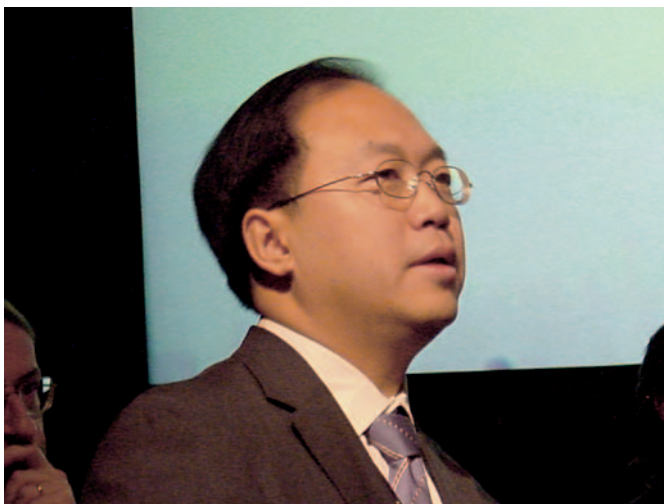
Wouter de Herder, MD and Bertram Wiedenmann, MD, during the former's inauguration as ENETS' Chairman.



Dame Julia M. Polak



Jean-Yves Scoazec, MD



James C. Yao, MD

interferon- α_{2b} . There also seemed to be a benefit for Bevacizumab-treated patients in terms of progression-free survival after 18 weeks, which was 96% in the Bevacizumab arm and 68% in the interferon arm. As Yao said, a series of other VEGF antibodies is currently under evaluation in clinical studies.

Another promising therapeutic approach in the VEGF field is, as Yao pointed out, the mammalian target of rapamycin (mTOR), which is a key enzyme in the VEGF-induced signal-transduction cascade. After encouraging preclinical results, the mTOR-inhibitor RAD001 has reached the stage of clinical studies as well.

'Other potentially antiangiogenic compounds with preliminary but very encouraging results are, for example, PTK/ZK und PTK787,' said *Will Steward* of Leicester, UK. As another possible approach for NET therapy, Steward mentioned the inhibition of cell cycles, for instance with Ro 31-7453, which interrupts mitose and induces apoptose.

'There is a large variety of promising approaches in today's NET research,' the new chairman de Herder concluded. New somatostatin-receptor ligands like SOM230, radioreceptor therapy with new tracers or histone-deacetylase inhibitors are just some examples in what he calls the huge diversity of NET research. Consequently, de Herder sees many reasons for optimistically looking ahead to the future of NET research.

Protocol of the General Assembly of the European Neuroendocrine Tumor Society (ENETS)

held in Prague, Czech Republic, on 22 March 2006, 4:45–5:27 p.m.

The annual General Assembly of ENETS was held during the 3rd Annual ENETS Conference in Prague. The invitation was sent out to all ENETS members on February 28, 2006, along with the meeting agenda. For the General Assembly session, 138 ENETS members were present, including all members of the Extended Executive Committee (*Bertram Wiedenmann, Guido Rindi, Ursula Plöckinger, Martyn Caplin, Wouter de Herder, Barbro Eriksson, and Philippe Ruszniewski*).

The members were welcomed by the ENETS chairman, *Bertram Wiedenmann*, who then addressed the first item to be discussed: opening membership to nurses and other medical professionals. In the past year, the Society has received a number of membership applications from nurses and medical assistants. These applications have been rejected, the reasoning being that only physicians can be members. ENETS member *Graeme Poston*, of the United Kingdom, said that the nurses and assistants with whom he works are fully competent in working in the NET research field and that because they have such close contact to patients, that they would be valuable contributors to the Society's aims of improving treatment and therapeutic procedures.

Member *Kjell Öberg*, of Sweden, also supported opening up membership, stating that qualified nurses should be admitted. Member *Marianne Soden Serjanej*, of the US, said that supervising physicians would also be valuable members to the Society. *Larry Kvals*, of the US, supported the idea, adding that he has a nurse in his Tampa clinic who wrote her doctorate on carcinoid tumors.

Chairman Wiedenmann then asked for a show of hands for support or disagreement. A majority of 137 voters supported allowing for non-physicians to join the Society and it was decided that the ENETS by-laws can be so interpreted to allow for admission of non-physician members to the Society, as long as the applicants are medical professionals.

The treasurer's report was then given by *Ursula Plöckinger*, treasurer of ENETS. She summarized that ENETS, founded in March 2004, did not acquire membership fees for the first year of 2004 and had opened a bank account in December 2004 at the Deutsche Bank AG Berlin. She said that membership had grown from the previous annual meeting, in April 2005, from 233 members to the current number of 370 as of March 17, 2006.

The Society initiated in 2005 the collection of 30-EUR annual membership dues, and also received grants from the pharmaceutical companies Novartis and Ipsen toward the funding of a new website. Novartis financially supported the Society's 2005 conference in Cracow with an unrestricted educational grant and Ipsen supported the organization of the Society's first of two consensus conferences, which was held in November 2005 in Frascati, Italy.

The Society's expenses included the costs for the ENETS Coordinating Office, i.e. a part-time worker, student assistance, payment in advance for a part-time worker in Rotterdam, consumables and the costs of preparing the Cracow, Frascati and Prague conferences. For the business year 2006, the Society expects to pay for online access to the Society's journal, *Neuroendocrinology*, ENETS staff in Berlin and Rotterdam, costs associated with the Prague conference and also for the planning of the second part of the Frascati consensus meeting, as well as the prepayments for the 4th Annual Conference, which will take place in Barcelona, 15–17 March, 2007.

Dr. Plöckinger then stated that ENETS will employ two external auditors for the review of financial management of ENETS. This must be done according to German laws (BGB). The two proposed auditors are *Dr. Christian Arnold* of Freiburg and *Dr. Ulrich-Frank Pape* of Berlin, Germany. A certified accountant will then verify the audit and a report will be sent to the local tax office. A detailed financial report for business year 2005 will then be sent to all members. The general assembly uniformly agreed upon this matter.

Bertram Wiedenmann then presented the new designates for the ENETS Executive Committee. The following officers will serve from 2006 until 2008:

Chairman: *Wouter de Herder*, Rotterdam
Chairman-Elect: *Guido Rindi*, Parma
Vice-Chairman: *Bertram Wiedenmann*, Berlin
Treasurer: *Ursula Plöckinger*, Berlin
Scientific Secretary: *Martyn Caplin*, London
Member: *Barbro Eriksson*, Uppsala
Member: *Philippe Ruszniewski*, Clichy

There were no objections to these elections among the General Assembly.

Bertram Wiedenmann then presented the matter of ENETS task forces. *Philippe Ruszniewski* opined that the suggested coordinators of the task forces (global relations, clinical trials, diagnostics, tumor biology, guidelines and quality of life) be non-Executive Committee members. *Marianne Soden Serjanej*, of the US, questioned how often the task force members meet and what exactly they do, and *Massimo Falconi*, of Italy, questioned how each country represented in ENETS can be equally represented on the task forces. He also suggested a surgical task force.

The discussion led into the next agenda item, which is the ENETS Advisory Board. Member *Graeme Poston* suggested that perhaps new by-laws should be drafted so as to further specify what these organs are for, and that it would seem major changes and a wider discussion are needed. *Philippe Ruszniewski* focused on the national registries and said that that should be the focus of the organs. Member *David Gross*, of Israel said that he thought funding should come from the pharmaceutical companies so that a task force could focus on unifying the national NET registries. Member *Anne-Marie McNicol* said that more specific goals and a timeline are necessary. *Bertram Wiedenmann* said that between the Prague and Barcelona conferences a clearer plan of action should be drawn up. *Guido Rindi* added, however, that the problem is assembling people who all have busy schedules and member *Kevin Conlan*, of Ireland, stated that an advisory board, rather than separate task forces, would be best suited to accomplishing the Society's goals, namely developing the national registries. *Bertram Wiedenmann* stated that the Internet should be more utilized in organizing this, and that a questionnaire should be sent to all members to find out how each can and would want to contribute to this task.

Wouter de Herder, the ENETS incoming chairman, then discussed the Society's next annual conference. The meeting's focus, he said, will be more clinical, with perhaps sessions on hereditary aspects of NET, the TNM classification, G-grading, selected basic and clinical abstracts, new imaging modalities, new therapies and case-oriented approaches. *David Gross* suggested familial cancer syndromes, as well.

The General Assembly was adjourned at 5:27 p.m.
Prague, March 22, 2006

Bertram Wiedenmann, MD
Chairman
Berlin, Germany

Guido Rindi, MD
Vice-Chairman
Parma, Italy