

2003 Helsinki, Finland

7th EFNS Congress, Helsinki, Finland, 30 August - 2 September 2003

Helsinki: The `Northern Dimension`

The 7th congress of the European Federation of Neurological Societies took place in Helsinki from 30 August to 2 September 2003.

The scientific programme of the Congress, put together by the EFNS Congress Programme Committee chaired by Professor Jacques De Reuck, covered most major areas of neurology such as cerebrovascular diseases and stroke; ageing and dementia; Parkinson's disease and other movement disorders; neurooncology; drug development and safety; genetics in neurological disorders; autonomous and sexual dysfunctions; multiple sclerosis; neuromuscular and mitochondrial diseases; headache; epilepsy; and neuropharmacology. Other fields of interest included, for example, neuroethics and `music and neurology`. The book of abstracts contained close to 1000 titles. The electronic version of this abstract book and the syllabi of the highly attended teaching courses can be found on www.efns.org.

A special session and city tour, expertly guided by Professor Matti Haltia, was developed to the history of neurology. During this event Professor Haltia was given the Clifford Rose Award for his merits in that very special field.

The local arrangements committee was chaired by Professor emeritus Jorma Palo who, together with other committee members, got special delight in the large number of participants: 3200. These were attracted to the `Northern Dimension` of Europe by the excellent scientific and organizational reputation of EFNS congresses, and very much likely also by Helsinki itself, which is widely appreciated as a safe, clean, and well-functioning meeting place. The congress was held in the modern Fair Centre easily reached by trams, buses and trains-and even by walking. For unlimited travelling, all participants received a 3-day ticket.

The Patron of the Congress was Ms Tarja Halonen, President of Finland.

The event was opened by the President of the EFNS, Professor Wolf-Dieter Heiss. The Helsinki Strings, an orchestra composed of young musicians, played the music of Jean Sibelius and Antonio Vivaldi, and Professor Eckart Altenmüller gave a talk on music and the brain. Professor Palo, wearing traditional national clothes, introduced the audience to the complexities of Finnish language, culture, and history in his both funny and moving overview `From Genes to Jean S.` The get-together party was entertained by `Dr Jazz`, the band of Professor Leif Andersson that is composed, expect one musician of medical doctors. More music was offered at the National Opera where `Cinderella`, the ballet of Sergei Prokofiev, was presented with the kind sponsorship of H.Lundbeck A/S.

For the first time, the EFNS organized a tournament for young neurologists up to the age of 35, which was a great success. There were two tournament sessions (fluent/nonfluent in English) taking place in parallel with six presenters at each tournament session. The selected tournament presenters received a bursary consisting of a free congress registration, up to four nights hotel accommodation, and travel expenses up to a maximum of APEX-fare return flight ticket to Helsinki.

The tournament will be repeated at the next congress of the EFNS.

In honour of the late Executive Director, Dr Uschi Tschabitscher, the prize for the tournament was entitled "Uschi Tschabitscher Prize for Young Neurologists".

At the closing ceremony, all prize winners were awarded and are as follows:

Uschi Tschabitscher Prize for Young Neurologists:

A.Palotas, Szeged, Hungary for the presentation on "Beneficial effect of haloperidol in Alzheimer's disease" and

G.Lovas, Budapest, Hungary for "Neuronal response to experimental demyelination and axonal transaction-a gene chip study"

Poster prize:

I.M:Cojocaru, Bucharest, Romania: Study of total homocysteine levels in type 2 diabetic patients with silent brain infarction, and

T.Kamichenka, Minsk, Belarus: Tolosa-Hunt syndrome: Clinical, MRI and angiography correlation of 100 patients

Last, but not least, Prof. Pavel Kalvach, Prague, Czech Republic received The Lundbeck International Neuroscience Foundation (LINF) Prize 2003 for his outstanding achievements in the field of postgraduate education within CNS.

Finally, good luck was wished to Paris, the congress city in 2004, and at a farewell cocktail, the golden memories of the Helsinki congress, as well as thereof arising plans and visions for the future closed another very successful and charming chapter of EFNS congresses.