UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM
RHEUMATISM RESEARCH UNIT

On October 10, 1963, the Vice-Chancellor, Sir Robert Aitken, opened the new Rheumatism Research Wing of the Department of Experimental Pathology, whose Director is Prof. John Squire. This has been built with funds and help in kind from the Endowment Research Fund of the United Birmingham Hospitals, and other bodies including the Nuffield Foundation, the Wellcome Trusts, and the Empire Rheumatism Council.

The Deputy Director, Dr. Kenneth Walton, and his team intend to concentrate their studies initially on the auto-immune hypothesis of the origin of certain of the rheumatic diseases, with special reference to protein mechanisms, both normal and abnormal.

The new Institute is lavishly equipped for studies in many other fields, including that of electron-microscopy, and is linked with the clinical facilities of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital.

After the opening ceremony, a guest lecture, entitled "Rheumatism Research—A Survey", was delivered by the Chairman of the Empire Rheumatism Council.

LIGUE EUROPÉENNE CONTRE LE RHUMATISME

Congress at Stockholm, August, 1963

The European League has been steadily growing in size and representation since the second world war. All European countries except Albania are now members, through their national organization. The European League itself is part of the International League against Rheumatism.

The Congress held this year covered 328 papers mainly concerning the pharmacology and serology of rheumatic diseases. Three sessions ran concurrently for most of the three days. Four papers on the new anti-rheumatic drug Indomethacin (two from the U.S.A. and two from England) reported experiences in the treatment of patients and the results of controlled trials. It was considered to be as effective as phenylbutazone, but more toxic.

Since it acted in some patients and in some diseases (e.g. osteo-arthritis of the hip) when other drugs were ineffective, it was a useful advance. A paper from Leyden described antibodies to voluntary muscle in the blood of patients with myasthenia gravis, and showed that there was some serological overlap between this disease and rheumatoid arthritis, patients with each showing a higher than expected frequency of positive tests for the other.

The most intriguing report was that of Dr. J. J. R. DUTHIE (Edinburgh) in which he described experiments which led him to culture the circulating leucocytes in the synovial fluid in patients with rheumatoid arthritis. Evidence for the existence of pleuropneumonia-like organisms was obtained and in one case subculture was successful.

As is usual in these conferences, the host country laid on an extremely attractive social programme, somewhat dampened by the weather.

Meetings of the Executive Committee and of the General Assembly of Delegates were held on August 25. Dr. Oswald Savage, as Delegate, and Prof. E. G. L. Bywaters, as Assistant Delegate, represented Great Britain.

It was reported that a Symposium on "The Therapy of Rheumatic Disease" would take place at Aix-les-Bains from January 24-27, 1964, and that a symposium on a subject connected with rheumatism would be held at Piestany, Czechoslovakia, from September 29 to October 2, 1964. In 1965, probably in October, the next meeting of the International League against Rheumatic Diseases is planned to take place in Buenos Aires.

A Symposium on a rheumatic subject will be held under the auspices of the European League at Baden-Baden in 1965. The next full Congress of the European League will be held in Lisbon in 1967.

The following officers of the European League were elected for 1965-1967:
Prof. F. Lenoch (Czechoslovakia), President
Dr. G. D. Kersley (England), First Vice-President
Prof. K. Gotsch (Austria), Second Vice-President
Prof. L. Michotte (Belgium), General Secretary
Prof. E. Colinet (Belgium), Treasurer
Dr. A. Jung (Switzerland), First Assistant Secretary
Dr. A. St. J. Dixon (England), Second Assistant Secretary.

The financial statement of the European League showed a credit balance of Belgian Frs 216,000, a slight reduction on the previous balance sheet.
The payment by individual countries to the European League consists of a basic sum (reduced when there is a very small membership) and a per capita sum for the volume “Rhumatologie Européenne”. As from this year (if the Pan-American League follows suit) the contribution to the International League will be increased and this will in turn require an increase from members of 50 cents (U.S.). This will increase Great Britain’s subscription to the European League from 5,400 to 8,982 Belgian Frs. Members, please note!

The President of the International League, Dr. Robles-Gil, stated that the International League planned to produce a Bulletin giving information on rheumatology from all countries in the world. A nominee from each country would later be required to co-operate in this sphere.

Prof. Michotte (Belgium), the General Secretary, announced that he planned to retire from this office in 1965, when he would have served for 14 years during which the membership had increased from 12 to 25 European countries.

After the meeting, Dr. O. Savage announced that he would retire as British Delegate to the Council of Delegates; Prof. E. G. L. Bywaters will thus become British Delegate to the next Congress, leaving a vacancy for Assistant Delegate.

Dr. G. D. Kersley (President)
Dr. A. St. J. Dixon (Secretary)
British Branch of the European League against Rheumatism

NUFFIELD FOUNDATION

CONFERENCE ON THE CAUSES AND TREATMENT OF RHEUMATIC DISEASE, MAY, 1962

At the end of May, 1962, the Nuffield Foundation held a two-day conference at Ashridge College, at which 33 medical and scientific experts, half of them rheumatologists, discussed the causes and treatment of rheumatic diseases.

The stimulating Report of their Proceedings is now available and will be sent to interested applicants (without charge) by the Secretary of the Foundation.


OBITUARY

DRAGO ČOP, 1898-1963

Dr. Drago Čop, president of the Yugoslav Rheumatological Association and from 1947-1960 of the rheumatological section of the Medical Association of Croatia, was killed in a traffic accident on August 2, 1963.

He was born in 1898 at Velika Gorica (Croatia) and completed his medical studies in Graz (Austria) in 1922. As assistant at the Neurological Clinic of the Faculty of Medicine in Zagreb, he became interested in physical medicine and in 1928 founded the first and largest institute for physical therapy in Yugoslavia. Impressed by the great number of rheumatics among his patients, he became our first rheumatologist, and was the founder of the first rheumatological institute in Zagreb (1938), the rheumatological section of the Medical Association of Croatia (1947), the Yugoslav Rheumatological Association (1949), and the journal Reumatizam (1954).

He organized courses in rheumatology for medical students and postgraduate specialists, and published some forty papers, among them an original classification of the rheumatic diseases. Some 20 years ago he insisted that the various types of “inflammatory rheumatism” formed a single group which should be separated from the degenerative and other joint diseases.

He was a member of the Rheumatism Academy at Amsterdam, a corresponding member of the German Rheumatologic Society, and for 4 years a member of the committee of the “Ligue Européenne contre le Rhumatisme”.

The premature death of this great pioneer, still at the height of his powers, will be regretted by rheumatologists throughout the world. T. DÜRRIGL.
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