Sixth European Congress of Cardiology

The Sixth European Congress of Cardiology took place in Madrid from 23-30 September and was attended by over 3000 delegates and in addition half as many associate members. This exceptionally good attendance bore witness to the success of the previous European meetings and the anticipated delights of Madrid. This great gathering was a threefold increase on that at the Prague meeting in 1964; many unexpected registrations came at the last minute and this could easily have disorganized the secretariat. That it never faltered was a tribute to the smooth efficiency of the Secretary General, Dr. de la Hoz Fabra.

Scientific sessions were held in the brand-new and appropriately named Palace of Congresses. Sessions started each day at 8.30 a.m. and did not finish until 8.30 p.m.; social events began at 9 p.m. or later. The form of the Congress generally followed that adopted at earlier meetings which have recognized the need for comprehensive coverage of important contemporary topics. The solitary opening event each morning was a symposium; those concerning evaluation and treatment of angina, current themes in paediatric cardiology, and pulmonary function in heart disease were among the best. The symposia as a whole were well conducted, with a good selection of speakers eminent in their particular specialties. In general they were more successful than the sessions later in the day which tended to suffer from the quota system and the difficulties encountered by interpreters, owing to problems of medical terminology and the tendency of less experienced speakers to go too fast. Each day a Round-Table discussion followed the symposium while the rest of the day was devoted to simultaneous free communications in three or four halls. There did not seem to be much difference between the Round-Table discussions and the symposia which were variously synopses of current knowledge or of personal attitudes. Inevitably, some of the most interesting contributions were taking place in halls too small to hold all those wishing to attend. Though the programme must have been arduous even for really dedicated congressists, the diversity of scientific content permitted many of us to pay one or more visits to the magnificent Prado Museum without even a twinge of conscience.

Topics covered in the morning sessions, in addition to those mentioned earlier, were the arrhythmias, techniques for the determination of blood flow, cardiac metabolism in hypertrophy, circulatory disorders after heart surgery, the work of the World Health Organization, and the recognition of incipient heart failure. Selection had been egalitarian, all participating centres being given fair representation which made for some diversity of viewpoint and language but did not contribute to continuity of theme. A prevailing problem for Chairmen of morning sessions was to find time for adequate discussion of contributions. Among the free communications a few breath-stopping notions were revealed to the diligent searcher; for example, the prevention of human coronary artery disease by chondroitin sulphate A (with a 30-year follow-up and significance at the 1 in 10,000 level), and the prescription of surgical coronary bypass for acute myocardial infarction.

Looking back over the scientific aspects of the Congress as a whole one had the impression of a very wide interest in the surgery of ischaemic heart disease in many countries, and many papers were devoted to this, both to venous bypass grafting of the coronary arteries and to excision of dyskinetic areas of ventricular myocardium or of aneurysms. There were interesting mentions of myocardial scanning with radioisotopes to show areas of poor coronary perfusion.

Mention must be made of the excellent and extensive exhibition of cardiological, medical, and surgical equipment and of the displays by many leading manufacturers of drugs in everyday use by cardiologists. This contrasted with the lack of any display of cardiological or general medical journals or other publications; stands demonstrating the wealth of current cardiological literature were looked for in vain.

The organization was superb but even Dr. de la Hoz Fabra had not been able to legislate against the rain which had fallen in unprecedented amounts during the week preceding the Congress and which heartlessly deluged the *canapés* at the Mayor's reception. A whole day off to go to Toledo, the original capital city of Spain, and now a national monument, was a welcome diversion in the middle of the week. We set out in our coaches with

the gaiety of schoolchildren and rounded off our visit with a memorable outdoor luncheon banquet. The spectacle of hundreds of waiters assembled like so many penguins to feed the several thousand of us will not easily be forgotten. Madrid is a beautiful and gracious city and all of us who attended the recent Congress would like

to congratulate the organizers and to thank our Spanish hosts for the careful planning and warm hospitality which made the Sixth European Congress so enjoyable and so successful.

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