

Meeting Review:

10th International Congress of Cardiothoracic and Vascular Anesthesia

It is a great pleasure for me as a Member of the Local Organizing Committee to write a report about the 10th International Congress of Cardiothoracic and Vascular Anesthesia (ICCVA) which was being held at the Hilton Hotel in Prague, Czech Republic between August 27 and 30, 2006. The Congress was jointly organized by the Society of Cardiovascular Anesthesiologists (SCA) and the Czech Society of Anesthesiology and Intensive Care Medicine (CSARIM). It was attended by a total of 569 people from 54 countries which included 486 registered delegates, 45 exhibitors and 38 accompanying persons.

The theme of the Congress, "The changing face of cardiothoracic and vascular anesthesiology", promised an attractive programme. The Faculty consisting of 84 members worked hard to fulfil the expectations of attendees. These speakers presented altogether 89 lectures in two parallel sessions. In addition, there were two late afternoon specials, industrial symposia (Bayer and Abbott) and industry supported sessions/lectures (Organon, Haemoscope, Linde and Novo Nordisk), industrial exhibits, transesophageal echocardiography workshop and poster exhibition comprising 111 posters.

It is not possible to mention all the highlights of the Congress and not to omit one at such a small space in this article. There were many stars but let me present my personal view. The Opening Ceremony in the evening of Sunday, August 27 was started by welcome speeches of Professor George Silvay, Mount Sinai Hospital, New York, USA, Honorary President of the Congress, Professor James G. Ramsay, President of the SCA and Professor Karel Cvachovec, Charles University, Prague, Czech Republic, President of the Local Organizing Committee and President of the CSARIM. Czech historian of architecture Zdeněk Lukeš then introduced to the numerous audience Prague's modern architectural monuments, especially in art nouveau. His presentation illustrated with a plenty of slides was very interesting for foreigners whom provided a suggestion what to see in Prague as well as for local people who realized which architectural treasures they are passing by every day without registering them. After the Welcome Cocktail the Faculty spent three hours cruising on the Vltava river through the illuminated Prague and seeing in reality some of the buildings mentioned before, such as The Dancing House by Frank Owen Gehry and Vlado Milunič.

The actual scientific programme began on Monday quite early in the morning with the session titled "Approach to challenging cardiac surgical patients" chaired by George Silvay and Hans-Joachim Priebe. Maria Galati, USA, spoke about anesthesia benchmarks and Joachim Radke, Germany, about ethics and money in anesthesia and intensive care. This ethical and financial framework was supplemented by Benjamin Drenger, Israel talking about standardization of perioperative assessment and Solomon Aronson, USA, who fully explained the problem of ischemic mitral regurgitation. Both of these topics often entail ethical and financial burden.

The parallel programme line during the whole Monday morning was devoted to the thoracic anesthesia and dealt with anesthesia technique for esophagectomy, lung ventilation, separation and injury in thoracic surgery. The Monday afternoon sessions addressed the issues of echocardiography in cardiac surgery, ventricular assist devices – their indications and management, organ protection as well as blood transfusion with their risks or alternatives.

Late afternoon special on Monday was presented by Professor Hans-Joachim Priebe, the Past President of the European Society of Anesthesiology. In his lecture he summed up the current situation with perioperative beta-blocker therapy, which was already in 2002 designated as one of 11 specific practices with sufficient clinical-based evidence for patient safety. However, in the light of recently published studies (2005, 2006) he recommended waiting for results of a large trial proving beta-blockers' effectiveness and safety, such as the POISE (PeriOperative

ISchemic Evaluation) study, before a widespread use of these drugs on ordinary surgical wards can be implemented.

Tuesday morning started with another fixed star of cardiac anesthesia, namely epidural and spinal anesthesia for cardiac surgery. After Hugo van Aken, Germany, who spoke about the impact of epidural anesthesia on organ function, Beyhan Bakkaloğlu, Turkey, offered a six-year experience with 487 patients undergoing off-pump revascularizations and recommended the technique either for MIDCABs or for OPCABs with contraindications to general anesthesia. Richard Kowalewski, Canada, then presented his unique concept of high spinal anesthesia using hyperbaric bupivacaine 15-20 mg with opioids supplemented by light general anesthesia. His vast experience includes more than 9000 patients now. In the next session "Approach to challenging cardiac surgical and vascular patients" Martin Strítěský, Czech Republic, advocated the "awake" approach (sole epidural) to cardiac surgery performed with cardiopulmonary bypass.

In parallel to regional anesthesia Helfried Metzler, Austria, gave an extensive rationale for a sound approach to patients with recently introduced coronary stents who can bring much trouble in everyday practice.

Basic Transesophageal Echocardiography (TEE) Workshop took place on Tuesday afternoon. Moderated by Jack Shanewise, USA, all speakers presented a comprehensive description how to efficiently master TEE in the perioperative period to the numerous audience that gave up other attractive parallel sessions like "Deep hypothermic circulatory arrest" or "Grown-up congenital heart disease". At this time all over the world TEE is steadily shifting from cardiologists' to anesthesiologists' and intensivists' hands.

Tuesday's Late Afternoon Special followed after sessions like HITT (Heparin-induced thrombocytopenia and thrombosis) symposium sponsored by Organon and parallel and provocative "Advanced age – acceptable risk or contraindication for surgery?" Per Johansson, Denmark, introduced the audience into a new era of transfusion medicine, i.e. hospitalwide thromboelastography (TEG). His results deserve congratulation.

For Wednesday there were four sessions left – "Nitric oxide, its use and misuse", "SIRS and challenge of bleeding", "New drugs" and "Anesthesiologic management of operations on thoracic aorta."

Traditional Gala Dinner took place on Tuesday at Žofín Palace situated on a small island on the river Vltava just in front of the National Theatre and viewing Prague Castle opposite. Thanks to a pleasant weather it was a nice opportunity to enjoy good meal among colleagues and friends from all over the world together with one of the nicest views in Prague.

At the conclusion, it is necessary to warmly thank all the presenters for their comprehensive and attractive lectures, chairpersons for a valuable discussion as well as to all the poster authors for their effort in presenting the interesting results of their research. Highly appreciated is also the support granted by all the partners such as Abbott, Arrow International, Organon, Bayer Health Care, Hameoscope, Linde and Novo Nordisk.

The organizers supported logistically by Congress organizer Guarant International did their best to prepare a high-quality, friendly and perhaps and hopefully a long time remembered meeting in a pleasant place in the heart of Europe. I believe they were successful. The next International Congress of Cardiothoracic and Vascular Anesthesia will take place down south at Cape Town, South Africa in 2008. Let us wish to see ourselves all there together, even with those who really wanted to come to Prague and unfortunately, due to various reasons, could not. Goodbye in Cape Town.

Michal Horáček, MD, DEAA
michal.horacek@fnmotol.cz