

THE AUSTRIAN SOCIETY OF DERMATOLOGY AND VENEROLOGY (ÖGDV)

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The following is largely based on several more extensive texts:

- (1) Holubar K: Festschrift: Zur Hundertjahr-Feier der Österreichischen Gesellschaft für Dermatologie und Venerologie, ed. by the society, Vienna 1990
- (2) Holubar K: An account of the history of the Austrian Society of Dermatology upon its centenary. Wien klin Wochenschrift 1991; 103:91-94
- (3) Angetter CA and Holubar K: Eine kurzgefasste Geschichte der österreichischen Gesellschaft für Dermatologie und Venerologie mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der Jahre 1939-1945. ed by the society, Vienna 2002 (67 pages)
- (4) Holubar K and Schmidt C: Zur Geschichte der Gründung der Deutschen Dermatologischen Gesellschaft Hautarzt 1991; 42:402-405

The history of the Austrian Society, henceforth referred to with the official acronym **ÖGDV** is tortuous and relates especially to the foundation of the German Society (Deutsche Dermatologische Gesellschaft, DDG). This is due to the following facts:

The German society was intended to be founded in September 1888 in Cologne, of which there is not written proof. A written statement giving the intended name of the society was published out of Prag in January 1889(4), signed by the professors FJ Pick, Prague, A Neisser, Breslau (Wroclaw) and E Lipp, Graz. The incorporation of this *German* society was made under *Austrian* law in a *Czech* city, Prague, then Austrian Empire. The first congress was also held in Prague in June 1889, just two months before the first international congress in Paris in August of 1889. As can be seen, Austrians were involved at the highest level, especially Eduard Lipp from Graz was active in this regard. Consequently it is evident that the German society was one of the dermatologists of *German language* as is for instance the Société Française de Dermatologie et Vénérologie the society of the *francophone world*. An "Austrian" society was superfluous at the time, our society was named *Wiener Dermatologische Gesellschaft (Viennese Dermatological Society)*. This was also a reflexion of the predominant position the city held at the time, within the realm and in Central Europe, in the field and politically. This name was kept till 1933.

The ÖGDV was founded upon application by Moriz Kaposi on 18 February 1890 and approved by the authorities on 25 February 1890; the first meeting was held on 19 March 1890. A few interesting details, timewise, are worth mentioning. (The proto-history of the European societies, especially the Italian and German of which I have knowledge, cannot be considered here)

It is interesting to note the intertwining of foundation and the first meetings of the German, the French Societies and the ÖGDV. The German society was officially founded in April 1889 and had its first meeting in June of this year. The French society was founded in June of 1889 and had its first meeting only in April of 1890. The ÖGDV was founded in February 1890 and had its first meeting still before the French in the subsequent month. But it was France which had staged in between the first *international congress* in Paris in August 1889.

The ÖGDV flourished and had already 301 members on the eve of WW I. After the war there were only hundred-odd left because Austria had become a *quantité négligéable*. Also the dermatological journal of German language, Archiv für Dermatologie und Syphilis, was

henceforth edited in Germany and not in Vienna. Still, presidents of the German society continued to come from Austria, Gustav Riehl sr. was the last. In 1933, after the rise of Hitler and the National-Socialists in Germany, the proposed meeting of the German society in Vienna was cancelled and our society was called to be populated by “*either Jews or Christian-Socialists who are openly opposed to our state*”, in a letter by Prof. Bodo Spiethoff, Jena, to the Prussian Ministry of the Interior, 19 July 1933). Upon that, the ÖGDV officially changed its name into “*Österreichische dermatologische Gesellschaft*” (Austrian dermatological society). In 1938 after the occupation of Austria, the society was dissolved. On 31 December 1945 the re-establishment was officially requested and was legally approved on 23 May 1946.

On 26 May 1984 the official name was changed into *Österreichische Gesellschaft für Dermatologie und Venerologie* (Austrian Society for Dermatology and Venerology, ÖGDV). The percentage of Jewish members in the ÖGDV before WW II were given by Prof. Michael Hubenstorf, my successor in the chair of the history of medicine, as 68%. The propaganda figure in 1938 was 80%.

It may be permitted to mention a small historical detail: Joseph Plenck, the Viennese protodermatologist of twohundred years ago, 1735-1807, was professor and secretary of the Imperial Medical Josephine Academy, where today is the institute for the history of medicine. So the chairholder in the history of medicine is physically and metaphorically sitting in Plenck’s chair. The author of these lines had the honor to occupy this position 1989-2001.

Today, the ÖGDV has 829 members (September 2002). There is an executive committee, a board of the society and a formal plenum meeting on occasion of the main annual congress.

There are ordinary, extra-ordinary and supporting members, further, honorary and corresponding members.

Presidential terms were one year originally but are for two-year periods now. The outgoing president is serving as vice president for one year after his term as president, the remaining year the president-elect serves this function. The main congress originally was held in June but now is held in November, possibly on the last weekend, because there is (was) no collision with the American Academy (now in March) or the Journées dermatologiques (previously in March, now in December), and more importantly, because it coincides with Joseph Plenck’s (1735-1807) birthday on 28 November.

The highest distinction of the ÖGDV is the Gold Medal of the Society, so far awarded only once, to Prof. Eleazar Feuerman, Tel Aviv in 1999. It bears the Latin inscription “*Societas Austr. Dermatol. et Venerol.*” on the avers side, and the name of the laureate and the words “*signum laudis*” on the reverse side.

There are several prizes awarded by the ÖGDV: the Hebra Prize, the Unilever Prize, the AESCA (Schering-Plough) Prize, the Unilever-Prize, the Franz and Senta Perutz Foundation Prize, a Prize for Theses, a Poster Prize and the Joseph Kyrle Travel Funds.

The ÖGDV has a subsection the *Österreichische Akademie für Dermatologische Fortbildung* (ÖADF) Austrian Academy for CME. This body was established in 1991 and is responsible for the now mandatory board examination of residents. Upon successful passing, a diploma is awarded which is necessary for specialist registration in the country. There are regular meetings organized by this ÖADF body for the above purpose – and are widely used by members and in-training dermatologists.

Furthermore the ÖGDV has “daughter societies”, or “sister societies” as the EADV chooses to call them and “Arbeitsgruppen” (literally, working-committees) : these affiliated societies cover dermatopathology, phlebology, dermato-surgery, allergology, dermatological oncology, STD, DEBRA, dermatological education, special scientific activities, and more.

We have no dermatological journal in Austria.

Members of the ÖGDV a/o board certified dermatologists in Austria can become ordinary members of the German society (DDG). This at least, is a relict of the time of the founding

fathers. Also, one Austrian dermatologist is always in the board of the DDG. After the rift of 1933, there has been no Austrian president of the DDG, however.

The Annual Meeting has two festive orations, the Hebra Lecture and the Plenck Lecture, both delivered on occasion of the main annual meeting in November every year. Usually it is within a Friday afternoon to Sunday noon timeframe. The meeting starts off with a histopathological slide seminar and then is continued with the administrative meetings and the gatherings of the “sister societies”, followed by the board meeting.

Saturday (and Sunday) mornings there are slide clinics, currently with participation of our neighbour countries. First came the Czech colleagues, then the Hungarians, last year the Slovenians and this year it is the turn of the Croatians. In between are short communications and Saturday night is a festive dinner. Turnout of participants is in the order of several hundred. Venue is traditionally the (new) Allgemeine Krankenhaus in Vienna. If the president is from another city, the annual meeting will be there, at least in one of the two years of office.

Next to the annual main meeting there is an alternation of a winter meeting somewhere in the snow or a spring meeting in another place of scenic background.

The address and secretariat of the society is at the historic site of the (old) Allgemeines Krankenhaus, Alser Strasse 4, A-1090 Vienna, where both the Hebra-Kaposi-Riehl and the Sigmund-Neumann-Finger departments were founded and existed from 1849 (professorships) to 1992.

Website of the ÖGDV is www.oegdv.at

E-mail address is oegdvcongress@medacad.org

The president *in office* (2000-2002 term) is Professor Fritz Gschnait from the Department of Dermatology at the Municipal Hospital in Vienna-Lainz.

The incoming president for the 2002-2004 term is Professor Werner Aberer from the Graz University department.

The most remarkable achievements within the last decades were (i) the term of office of Professor Klaus Wolff, Vienna, as chairman of the International Committee of Dermatology, governing body of the International League of Dermatological Societies and (ii) the rank assumed by Austrian dermatologists at the Tri-Continental Meeting in Kyoto 1993. Austria ranked fifth after USA, Japan, UK and Germany, in terms of physical participants, of abstracts submitted and of papers presented. There was another Tricontinental Meeting five years later in Cologne of which I have no breakdown figures.

We specially welcome participant dermatologists, pathologists, clinicians, from our geographical neighbours and partners in Central European history, - in the field and beyond.

K.H.

Dated Vienna, 7th September 2002, Ferdinand Hebra's birthday