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Cooperation between Polish and French Pneumonologists

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A conference jointly organised by Polish and French pneumonologists was held for the eighth time. This time Poznań hosted doctors from 12 Polish and 4 French centres. Lasting for several years now the continuous tradition of scientific sessions held in the French language proves strong relations between Polish and French pneumonologists. But it would not be possible without numerous government grants for studies in France, from which many Polish doctors have benefited. A few months long stays in France not only enhanced the medical knowledge, but also contributed to fondness for the French language and culture, and gave opportunity to create firm social links. Not surprisingly, one of the French guests was doctor Michel Vincent from Lyon, who in the past had taken care of traineeships of doctor Szczepan Cofta - one of the conference organisers.

The meeting began with a walk in the beautiful Old Town. A French-speaking guide presented the history of the city, paying special attention to the sites connected with France, e.g. House of Bretagne or a house where Napoleon stopped during his march to Moscow. This year the meeting was held in the splendid Górká Palace that was built in the 15th century, where the Poznań Archeological Museum has its seat. The conference started with a language workshop prepared by Barbara Sudoctorawska, a teacher from the French Institute in Warsaw. The workshop concerned speaking during a debate at scientific conferences. It reminded the listeners about useful expressions,

how to back up one's opinion or disagree with the previous speaker. It was an excellent introduction to a next point on the agenda, i.e. debate on tuberculosis in patients coming from underclass. Professor François Bonnaud from the University in Limoges talked about the problem of tuberculosis in France, whereas Tadeusz M. Zielonka from the Medical University of Warsaw paid attention to ethical, legal, financial and medical aspects of tuberculosis patients from difficult environment such as the homeless, unemployed, alcoholics, illegal immigrants etc. The effectiveness of solutions applied in both countries was compared. Poland had very good results of tuberculosis management in the past, and the experience of Polish phthisiologists was utilised by the WHO for doctoring up currently implemented programmes to fight tuberculosis. Unfortunately, in recent years, an old, well operating programme of care of patients with tuberculosis is being abandoned without implementing new solutions adopted in other European countries. Infectious diseases such as tuberculosis constitute a separate group of diseases that require special approach from health service. In the case of these diseases, a generally applicable principle of personal liberty and the necessity to obtain the patient consent to treatment has been significantly limited. For patients with infectious diseases may transmit the disease to other people, thus posing a social threat, in particular in case of extensively drug-resistant tuberculosis. Therefore contemporary doctors are

in a difficult situation. In democratic countries of the European Union, it is impossible to apply Russian or Belorussian methods of compulsory treatment of tuberculosis in closed medical centres. The problem is complex and requires the introduction of efficient and safe regulations that respect civil rights. A declaration of free diagnostics and treatment of patients with tuberculosis is insufficient. It is necessary to provide uninsured citizens from underclass with an easy and free access to diagnostics aimed at infectious diseases, and to actively seek such diseases in high risk groups. It is particularly difficult to reach certain social groups that do not want to undergo treatment. In France, a special mobile unit designed to fight tuberculosis in marginal environments has been introduced. It delivers medicine to immigrants, drug addicts or vagrants directly to the place where they live. In Poland, the care of tuberculosis is being taken over by sanitary segment, which in many regions of the country does not have a qualified and experienced in this field personnel or the means that can fulfil imposed obligations. We are no longer able to organise preventive examinations of people who have contact with sputum-positive patients or in high risk groups. We are far away from effective Dutch solutions based on systems motivating tuberculosis patients that do not cooperate with health service.

The exciting event at the conference was a concert of a bard from Wielkopolska, Jacek Kowalski (art historian and Romanist by profession, doctor hab. of the Adam Mickiewicz University), who sang especially prepared old Polish songs originating from the 17th-19th century, excellently translated to French by professor A. Doctorzewiecka. The songs were presented together with commentaries on their origins and authors. They were sung at the accompaniment of old instruments such as a lute, *citola* and romantic guitar. The songs written by Karpiński, Kochanowski, the Confederates of Bar (*Konfederaci barscy*) and the activists of the Polish January Uprising moved the audience to other times. It was a real feast for the spirit, which will be retained in memory by both Polish and French listeners. A festive dinner was a good opportunity to exchange ideas and discuss medical, historical and cultural issues.

This year conference was held under the patronage of the Rector of the Poznań University of Medical Sciences, professor. Jacek Wysocki. On behalf of the Rector, the session was opened by the Vice-Rector, professor Edmund Grześkowiak. Then the floor was taken by professor Halina

Batura-Gabryel, the head of the Teaching Hospital of Pneumology, Allergology and Pneumological Oncology, and the National Consultant in Lung Diseases. The French guests and well-earned, retired employees of the Teaching Hospital were honoured with a commemorative medal on the occasion of 60 years of academic pneumology in Poznań. The third lecturer was professor Mirosław Loba, the head of the Roman Institute at the Adam Mickiewicz University of Poznan, who was also a co-organiser of the conference. The first part of the morning session focused on the relations between medicine and literature. Professor Wiesław Malinowski from the Institute of French Studies spoke about tuberculosis at the rhythm of the 19th century music and French poetry, underlying the impact of the disease on the works of Fryderyk Chopin and poets that wrote about him. Whereas doctor Anna Loba, who is also a lecturer at the Adam Mickiewicz University of Poznan, focused on the relation between the disease symptoms and personality features described in French literature of the Middle Ages and Renaissance.

The medical part of the conference was opened by doctor Katarzyna Lewandowska from the Teaching Hospital of Paediatrics, Haematology and Oncology, Nicolaus Copernicus University in Torun. She drew attention to the crucial problem of doctor-patient communication. As a permanent representative of Poland in the European Association for Communication in Healthcare she shared her experience in popularisation of empathy in medical environment. Better doctor-patient relations undoubtedly will improve the effectiveness of doctors' activities, evaluation of health service by society, and will reduce the number of complaints received from patients and their families. Very interesting results concerning patients with COPD in French Polynesia were presented by doctor Małgorzata Grewling. Compared to patients from France, inhabitants of this overseas department significantly more frequently died in the course of the disease exacerbation. COPD occurred more frequently in women, compared to patients from Europe. Doctor Iwona Patyk from the Pneumology and Allergology Ward, Military Hospital in Bydgoszcz, gave a lecture on severe asthma. Despite the fact that asthma constitutes merely 5–10% of all cases, it involves half of the costs intended for asthma and poses a grave medical problem. She shared her experience in participation in treatment programme of such patients with omalizumab. An ophthalmologist from Poznan, doctor Iwona Rospond-Kubiak talked about the problem of lung cancer metastases to the retina. Particular difficulties pose the patients

with ocular changes that appear prior to diagnosis of neoplasm in the chest. A very absorbing issue of mineralogical analysis of the lungs was presented by doctor Michel Vincent. Exposure to silicon, asbestos and many other inorganic compounds may cause numerous diseases or changes in the lungs that are treated as idiopathic or of unknown aetiology. It cannot be excluded that inhaled to the lungs inorganic dust is the cause of some cases of sarcoidosis, lung fibrosis or nodules of unclear origins. Doctor Monika Szaj from the Tuberculosis and Lung Diseases Ward in Szczecin discussed a case of a patient with immunosuppression after kidney transplantation, who suffered chronic diarrhoea. Histopathologic examination of the small intestine specimen showed the changes typical of tuberculosis. It confirms the need to exclude latent tuberculosis prior to the planned transplantation. Patients with positive IGRA result (interferon gamma release assay after stimulation by specific to *M.tuberculosis* antigens) prior to transplantation should undergo chemoprophylaxis with isoniazid. A rare case of necrotic skin and lung abscess was presented by doctor Knyziak-Mędoctorzycka from the Dermatology Ward, Central Clinical Hospital of the Ministry of Internal Affairs in Warsaw. This disease is very difficult to diagnose and treat. Positive effects were obtained after a long therapy with infliximab. Professor Dorota Sands from the Institute of Mother and Child discussed the principles of early diagnostics of cystic fibrosis. To its credit, Poland introduced commonly used blood screening tests that allow to detect the disease in newborn babies. Not many countries in the world may be proud of such achievement. Early diagnosis allows to apply prompt treatment.

The third session was begun by professor Zofia Oko-Sarnowska from the Cardiology Teaching Hospital in Poznań. She was talking about the possibilities of revealing sarcoidal lesions in the heart. Diagnostics takes advantage of various methods: electrocardiography, radiology, ultrasonography and scintigraphy. Yet the best results are achieved with magnetic resonance, which has become a method of choice in detecting cardiac sarcoidosis. Professor F. Bonnaud presented the cases of very fascinating and surprising pleural tumours causing profound hypoglycaemia. Although they were sometimes huge in size, they did not cause intensive dyspnoea or functional disorders of the respiratory system and were detected by accident during hospitalisation due to hypoglycaemia. The lecture of doctor Dorota Kuryga from the Laryngology Teaching Hospital in Biały-

stok concerned surgical treatment of obstructive sleep apnoea. Procedures performed in the upper airways undoubtedly may be helpful for a chosen group of patients. Therefore there is a need for a close cooperation between pneumologists and larynologists in order to choose the best therapy for particular patients. The next speaker was doctor Jacek Nasiłowski from the Pneumology Department, Medical University of Warsaw, who focused on hypoventilation syndrome in obese patients. The first step before diagnosis of the syndrome is observation of obesity (BMI > 35) and of hypercapnia (Pa CO₂ > 45 mm Hg) and exclusion of other diseases leading to complete respiratory failure (e.g. obstructive sleep apnoea, central apnoea, COPD in obese patients). Due to more and more common in rich societies obesity, it is expected that the number of cases of the syndrome will increase. Development of technology enables effective treatment of these patients, but, as professor Bonnaud emphasised, it entails huge costs, which constitute a challenge even for the richest countries. An excellent lecture on the use of anaesthesiological techniques in contemporary pneumology was given by doctor Agnieszka Sobczyk from the Anaesthesiology Department of the University Hospital of Lord's Transfiguration in Poznań. Restrictive and obstructive lung diseases are still a great challenge for anaesthesiologists, despite the accomplished progress in this field. To improve effects of treatment, cooperation between various experts is needed. The last lecturer was doctor Marcin Mikoś from the Department of Pneumology, Paediatric Allergology and Clinical Immunology in Poznań. He spoke about infection with bocavirus in children hospitalised due to severe dyspnea. Thanks to development of molecular methods, we are able to determine how often infection is caused by such factors.

Then the floor was taken by the Honorary Consul of France in Poznań, professor Tadeusz Schramm, who expressed his delight of the conference. He emphasised the significance of such bilateral meetings for the formation of Europe of nations. The conference was officially closed by professor François Bonnaud, who together with professor Jan Zieliński had initiated some time ago the tradition of Polish-French conferences. He summarised the accomplishment of previous meetings, accentuating the importance of interpersonal relations created during the debates. He thanked to the organisers of the preceding conferences and expressed hope for continuity in the future.

The last point in the schedule was Ostrów Tumski and visiting the cathedral in Poznań. The guide was a priest prałat Jan Stanisławski, who in French talked about history of the first Polish churches that were built in that place. In the cathedral's crypt there was a place where the first Poles were probably baptized, and in the Gold Chapel - the tomb of the first Polish kings. The guests were introduced to the archbishop of Poznań, Stanisław Gądecki, who showed interest in the meeting of Polish and French doctors.

It is worth mentioning that the perfectly organised conference was the result of a concerted effort of professor Halina Batura-Gabryel and doctor Szczepan Cofta from the Poznań centre. The substantial level of this year conference was very high, and Polish participants showed a great command of French. Traditionally, the lectures brought about absorbing discussions. Polish-French

conferences are of unique ambience, mainly due to people who constitute them. They have interdisciplinary character and, apart from exploring pneumonological issues, they create opportunity to reflect on the relationship between medicine, literature and art. It is well worth continuing and developing cooperation between the Polish Respiratory Society and its French counterpart in the future. The persons interested in active or passive participation in successive meetings that are held at the beginning of October, are asked to contact the authors of this article (tadeusz.zielonka@wum.edu.pl; szczepan.cofta@sk1.am.poznan.pl) or professor Joanna Domagała-Kulawik (domagalakulawik@gmail.com).

Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.