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# NEWS AND VIEWS

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## INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY OF HEMATOLOGY

### Fourth International Congress

Mar Del Plata, Argentina, September 1952

The Fourth Congress of the International Society of Hematology convened at Mar del Plata, Argentina on Sunday, September 21, 1952. Mar del Plata is a sea-side resort reminding one vaguely of Atlantic City and situated about 250 miles from Buenos Aires. The official headquarters of the Congress was at the Hotel Provincial which is next door to the largest casino in the world. Both establishments are under governmental auspices. The Congress was inaugurated at an official ceremony on Sunday evening, in the auditorium of the casino. Speeches were made by Dr. Alfredo Pavlovsky, President of the Society, the Minister of Health of Argentina, the Minister of Health of the Province of Buenos Aires, and by Dr. Paul Owren of Oslo. On the following day, the first session of the Congress took place. The large and well appointed auditorium in the Hotel Provincial was set up in "United Nations" fashion with table space for each delegate, and translation booths for the interpreters of the three official languages: Spanish, English and French. The physical arrangements as to lighting and sound were excellent and the seats very comfortable.

The Program was arranged for a six day meeting to begin each morning at 8:30 to 9:00 with a group of four official lectures on a single theme. The six themes discussed were as follows: (1) endocrine regulation of hematopoiesis, (2) histochemistry and cellular ultra-structure, (3) etiology and treatment of the leukemias, (4) effects of x-irradiation on the hematopoietic organs, (5) polycythemia, (6) hemolytic anemia and immunohematology.

The official lectures, which occupied a two hour period, were followed by a group of ten minute communications on a variety of subjects related to the topic of the day and were in turn followed, in the late afternoon, usually around five or six o'clock, by a round table discussion. Unfortunately, these were at first bogged down in translation trouble and in cut and dried "information please" questions. Free discussion was finally introduced with excellent results.

Contrary to most northern ideas, the South American work day is a very long one and the round tables usually continued until about 7:30 P.M. Dinner and dinner dancing began around 9:30 and continued until after midnight. It must be confessed that your Reporter, used to the more conservative ways of Boston, found these night sessions rather tiring. On a few occasions, the program was interrupted for visits to "Estancias" where barbecue luncheons had been arranged. At these were served the full gamut of Argentinian meats and meat products including such varied items of bovine and sheep anatomy as intestines, mesentery, omentum, and, as an especially appropriate piece de resistance, blood sausage.

#### *Endocrine Regulation of Hematopoiesis (First Day)*

This theme, the opening one, was discussed by Drs. M. R. Castex, B. Houssay (Argentina), W. Dameshek (U.S.A.) and S. Moeschlin (Switzerland). Professor Houssay reviewed the relationships of the hypophysis to hematopoiesis and lymphoid tissues. Dameshek continued on this subject, outlining the clinical correlations between the endocrine glands and the blood-forming organs and the use of the steroid hormones in blood dyscrasias. Moeschlin spoke of the nervous regulation of hematopoiesis with particular reference to the hypothalamus. An important communication in this group was that by Jerzy Glass of New York on the participation of glandular mucoprotein of human stomach in hematopoiesis and its dependence upon central nervous stimulation. Dr. Glass presented some of his most recent work on gastric muco-protein which he believes is either "intrinsic" factor itself or closely related to it. The remarkable effects of this material, when given orally together with minute doses of vitamin B<sub>12</sub> in cases of pernicious anemia was demonstrated.

*Histochemistry and Cellular Ultrastructure (Second Day)*

Excellent reviews were presented by Dr. de Robertis of Montevideo on electron microscopic observations; O. P. Jones of Buffalo, New York, on histochemical studies in North America; and by González-Guzmán of Mexico on his favorite subject, the nucleoli. What some observers thought was a note of comic relief was injected into this discussion by the



FIG. 1.—Speakers' rostrum, sound engineer, translation booth (far right), delegates at their tables. At speakers' table, from left to right, are Introzzi, Moeschlin (behind light), Dameshek, Houssay, Pavlovsky, coordinators and interpreters.



FIG. 2.—General view of meeting in action. The speaker must be holding forth in English, since the Americans (Crosby, Greenwalt, Lucia, Pflatzer), the Englishman Bodley Scott and the Israeli Rachmilewitz are without earphones. Señora Pavlovsky (also without earphones) is in center foreground.

observations of Dr. S. H. Wajda (Tomas Peron Faculty of Scientific Medicine of Mendoza, Argentina) who propounded his theory of red cell production from degenerated muscle tissue.

*Etiology and Treatment of the Leukemias (Third Day)*

Unfortunately, very little that was new came out of the numerous papers on this subject. Burchenal of New York gave a comprehensive account of the use of the folic acid antago-

nists and of the steroid hormones in the treatment of leukemia. Braier (Argentina) discussed the treatment of chronic leukemia with benzol and the use of so-called methyl donors, principally choline and methionine, to annul the toxic reactions of benzene.

*Effects of X-Irradiation on the Hematopoietic Organs (Fourth Day)*

Dr. Leon Jacobson (Chicago) spoke on his experiments dealing with the relationship of humoral factors residing in the spleen to recovery from irradiation injury to the bone marrow. Lorenz (Washington, D. C.) discussed similar effects induced by injections of bone marrow in the irradiated animal. Professor Amano of Japan described the development of acute leukemia in individuals exposed to the atomic bomb in Hiroshima, pointing out the direct correlation between the number of cases found two to three years after the bombing and the closeness of the individuals to the epicenter of the blast.

Among miscellaneous communications given on the same day, Crosby of the Army Medical Center in Washington discussed the capacity of the bone marrow to produce hemoglobin and its relationship to hemolytic disease. His studies indicated that patients with hereditary hemolytic anemia fail to develop anemia if the red cells survive 25 days or longer. Anemia develops when the average life span of the red cells is less than one seventh of the normal 120 days, or about 18 days.

*Polycythemia (Fifth Day)*

Dr. Hurtado (Lima, Peru) presented a notable paper on the polycythemia of high altitudes. This was followed by an exposition by di Guglielmo of Italy of his syndrome of "Erythro-Leukemia." Di Guglielmo appears to have modified his original ideas on this subject and now believes that this condition is a mixed form of myeloblastic and erythroblastic proliferation, in which the latter proliferation is unusually marked.

*Hemolytic Anemia and Immunohematology (Sixth Day)*

Lectures on autoimmune mechanisms by Witebsky (Buffalo) and by Race (London) on blood groups and genetics were featured in this session. Some rather lively discussions ensued. The use of ACTH and cortisone in the attempt to reduce maternal Rh iso-antibody production was reported by Linares Garzon of Cordoba, Argentina. It was stated that the babies from such treated mothers developed benign forms of hemolytic disease. Moeschlin (Switzerland) discussed the experimental aspects of suppression of antibody by ACTH and concluded from his experiments that the steroid hormones did not directly suppress antibody production but acted in a more indirect fashion.

The Congress terminated on Saturday night and on Sunday morning adjourned to Buenos Aires. In this magnificent city of four and a half million the delegates were to have been met and addressed by his Excellency the President of the Republic. However, when all the delegates were assembled on Monday morning, notification came from the President that he was occupied in very important affairs of State and could not see them. Thus, the Congress ended on a rather sour note.

In general, the Congress was beautifully conceived and beautifully executed. It represented an enormous amount of work, oftentimes under great handicaps, by a devoted local Committee headed by Dr. Reussi, and by a group of volunteer women under the aegis of Señora Pavlovsky. There were about 500 registrants, about 300 of whom were physicians. Of these about 20 came from the United States, 30 from Chile, 40 from Brazil, 5 from Italy, 2 from France, 2 from Sweden and 1 each from Switzerland, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Germany, Greece, Israel and Japan. The Japanese delegate, Professor Amano, aroused considerable interest especially when he informed the Congress that the Japanese Society of Hematology had 1500 members. Unfortunately, only 15 of these, constituting the Editorial Board of *Acta Haematologica Japonica*, were inducted at this time as Fellows of the International Society.

The weather, which had been bleak and cold upon our arrival at Mar del Plata suddenly turned warm and sunny and remained so during the entire week of the Congress. Natives of the city stated that such a perfect week of weather at this time of beginning spring was most unusual. This was indeed fortunate for it helped to make up for some of the misgivings of those who had questioned the wisdom of taking the Congress so far away from

Buenos Aires. Discussions took place as to the relative merits of having a lengthy Congress at a single hotel in a relatively small town without any outside distractions. (The casino was closed except at the very end of the week.) Although the distractions of a large city might well have reduced the somewhat sustained and heavy attendance at each meeting and cut down on the close contacts and friendships it must be confessed that to a visitor from a distance, the quiet confines of Mar del Plata at times proved a bit trying. On the other hand, the 250 mile distance from the capital ensured a minimum of governmental interference.

The "Coagulationists," headed by Owren (Norway), Seegers, Tocantins and Graham (U. S. A.), Baserga and de Nicola (Italy), although not featured on the regular program, had a two week period of work and study just prior to the official opening of the Congress. The work of this group was carried out at the National Academy of Science, where Dr. Pavlovsky has organized a Hemophilia Foundation. The families of the patients with hemophilia, together with a loyal coterie of volunteer women, have become a dedicated group pledged to do all in their power to advance knowledge in this disease. On the Saturday preceding the Congress a day long program dealing with hemophilia was held at the (unheated) National Academy. Your Reporter presided wearing his topcoat and bemoaning the lack of *calefaction*.

It was voted that the next Congress of the Society would be held in Paris in 1954 under the presidency of Dr. Paul Chevalier, and that the 1956 Congress would be held in Boston. Dr. I. González-Guzmán of Mexico and Leandro Tocantins of Philadelphia were elected the new Vice-Presidents of the Society. Drs. Sol Haberman and Marcel Bessis were re-elected as Secretaries General. Elected as the three new councillors for the United States were Joseph M. Hill (Dallas); Oliver P. Jones (Buffalo) and Carl V. Moore (St. Louis).

One might be permitted the addition of a few travel notes on this, our second trip to South America in a year. Peru, where we stopped first, is in many respects the most fascinating of the South American countries especially when one gets into the interior to the Altiplano or high plateau of the Andes.\* The center of the Incan civilization is there at Cuzco and not far away are the awe inspiring ruins of the Incan fortress Machu Picchu, perched high on a magnificent mountain top. The trip across Peru to Lake Titicaca, an all day affair in a so-called Buffet car, is through some of the most primitive country of the world this side of Tibet. Lake Titicaca has an old Scotch boat which ferries one across to Bolivia and to hordes of passport inspectors, police, soldiers, spies and the like. The colorful Indians in their weird costumes, gathering about at the stations, the herds of llamas and alpacas, the high Andes all about, make this an unforgettable experience. La Paz, Bolivia, set into a great bowl 12,500 feet above sea level, is an almost incredible city and its airport, situated 1000 feet higher on a plateau dominating the city, is the world's highest. Walking upstairs when elevators are not running (a frequent occurrence) is apt to be a very trying experience.

Throughout South America, with the possible exception of Brazil, there seems to be a rising tide of nationalism and authoritarianism. One has the impression that the "Yankee" is not very popular, a not uncommon feeling throughout the world. (Greece and Turkey are exceptions.) The very democratic and gracious people of Chile are greatly disturbed lest their newly elected President turn out to be the Dictator he was many years ago. Peron's country of Argentina may well be on the economic skids. There is no white bread, meat is rationed, and the huge steak one got a year or two ago for fifty cents is now one-half the size and twice as expensive. Fortunately, one sees less and less of Evita's pictures. The constantly reiterated slogan, "Peron Cumple, Evita Dignifica!!" seems to ring hollow now.

The most exciting city of South America is by all odds São Paulo, Brazil. It is growing by leaps and bounds, and looks and feels like a city in the United States. One finds the

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\* Some members of the Congress went fishing, and appropriately enough, one of the biggest marlins ever caught anywhere, weighing 991 pounds, was hooked and landed (with Dr. Seegers' help) by Dr. Joseph Hill of Texas off the coast of Peru. Seegers' (Detroit) best effort, it is stated in the Dallas papers, was an 8 pound bonito.

most advanced architecture in the world, modern buildings by the score, a remarkable medical center, and a remarkable program of construction being carried out. Certainly one sees little of the terrible poverty evident in the rival city of Rio de Janeiro where the poor are huddled in miserable shacks amidst the lovely hills and magnificent apartment houses which, with the back drop of the bay, make this the most beautiful city in the world. Brazil looks like the coming country of South America and São Paulo the great city of the future.

South American medicine looks more and more to the United States and less and less to Europe for guidance. There are great centers for medical education in Lima, Peru; Santiago, Chile; Buenos Aires, Argentina; and in the two big cities of Brazil. Your Reporter was particularly struck by the Andean laboratory in Lima and Maracocha, Peru (the latter at 16,500 elevation) headed by Dr. Alberto Hurtado; the various research laboratories at Hospital Salvador in Santiago, Chile, headed by Drs. Hernan Alessandri, Armas Cruz and Hector Ducci; by the laboratories in the Instituto Oswaldo Cruz of Rio where Dr. Walter Cruz holds forth in hematology, and by the numerous excellent laboratories and clinics of the Faculdade de Medicina in São Paulo. A most interesting place is the Snake Institute at Butantan just outside of São Paulo. Professor Houssay works under many handicaps in a converted mansion, every inch of which has been utilized for laboratory space.

At times one derives the impression that the South Americans have an inferiority complex about their medical knowledge. This is usually undeserved since their standards of medicine are often as good or better than our own and their serious desire to learn so striking. It is true that research has lagged behind until recently, and that too great a burden has been placed on the teachers, particularly with the huge classes so often taught, but this is gradually being rectified. The Faculdade in São Paulo, for example, has only 80 students per class.

Lecturing in South America by a North American is usually done in English although it is nice to have a little knowledge of Spanish. If the lecturer talks slowly and distinctly and uses illustrative slides liberally, the going is fairly easy. Putting slides into Spanish is highly appreciated.

An unforgettable experience was a lecture before the class of Internal Medicine in Lima. Seated in row upon row in the huge amphitheater, all dressed in white gowns, were 500 attentive students, their brown Indian and part-Indian faces contrasting sharply with their white gowns. Quite different were the formal faculty lectures, held in the evening about 9 (*más ó menos*); these were models of continental pomp and ceremony.

The North American doctor has a good deal to learn from his South American colleagues, who are often willing to take on new ideas and new technics without the oft hidebound conservatism of the North. Even in our day we have seen medical leadership shift from the continent of Europe to that of North America. Is it beyond belief that some day South American medicine will be in the vanguard?—*William Dameshek*