

Journal für Kardiologie

Austrian Journal of Cardiology

Österreichische Zeitschrift für Herz-Kreislauserkrankungen

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Journal für Kardiologie - Austrian

Journal of Cardiology 2016; 23

(5-6), 116-117

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Krause & Pachernegg GmbH • Verlag für Medizin und Wirtschaft • A-3003 Gablitz

P.b.b. 02Z031105M,

Verlagsort: 3003 Gablitz, Linzerstraße 177A/21

Preis: EUR 10,-

Veranstaltungskalender

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Editorial: The Past and Future of the ALPE ADRIA ASSOCIATION OF CARDIOLOGY

M. F. Kenda, K. Huber

■ Some Historical Facts

The ALPE ADRIA ASSOCIATION of CARDIOLOGY (AAAC) was founded in 1993, when the newly founded Slovenian Society of Cardiology organized the first AAAC meeting. The meeting was held in Radenci, Slovenia, under the motto “**In the middle of Europe, in the middle of the heart**”. At the beginning five member countries were present: Austria, Croatia, Hungary, Northern Italy, and Slovenia. In the following years the Czech Republic and Slovakia joined the Association.

In 1994 the AAAC statutes were discussed and accepted. Since then the meeting is organized on an annual basis whereby the meeting locations change from year to year between different founding nations.

■ Newsletter of the AAAC and other Publications

In 1995, the first Newsletter of AAAC was published, edited by **Camerini** and **Kenda**. The aim of this publication was to improve and increase the communications and to favor the interchange of information among the cardiologists of the Alpe Adria region. This interchange was not only related to excellent science but also to history and culture in the Alpe Adria region. A good example for these efforts to combine science with history and culture is the short article written by **Dalla Volta** with the title “Alpe Adria – the roots of common history and culture”. This article demonstrated in an excellent way the link between people in the Alps, the Adriatic Sea and the Carpathians, usually referred to as “Mitteleuropa”.

Cibic wrote in the “Milestones” of the AAAC Newsletter the article “Following the steps of Marcus Gerbezius”. In this article he pointed out that it was the Slovene Marco Gerbec who in 1717 first described the “slow pulse” as a potential cause of “epileptic attacks” – 44 years before Morgagni. In fact the syndrome caused by a complete atrio-ventricular block is now named in complete “Syndroma Gerbezius Morgagni Adams Stokes”.

“Harvey, the University of Padua and the discovery of circulation” was published by **Basso** and **Thiene** from Padua, where the overview of discovery of modern circulation was historically very well documented and presented.

Years ago “The role of molecular genetics in the study of heart muscle disease”, an important article presenting some new and modern aspects on the heart muscle diseases was published by **Mestroni** and **Giacca**. “The role of beta-blockers in

heart failure” published by **Di Lenarda** and **Sinagra** demonstrated a new way of heart failure treatment. Both articles originate from the Department of Cardiology in Trieste led by **Prof. Fulvio Camerini**.

Another very useful article was written by **Gasser**, **Lercher** and **Klein** from the Department of Cardiology at the University in Graz: “Cardiovascular manifestations of Lyme disease”: It demonstrated the high importance of this typical disease in the Alpe Adria region.

Unfortunately, due to financial problems, only three issues of the Newsletter of the Association were published.

In 1997, the *Journal of Clinical and Basic Cardiology* was founded in Graz by **Klein** and **Gasser**. The intention of the editors was to make the journal the official publication organ of the AAAC. Despite great efforts and again due to financial difficulties this goal was only reached temporarily and the journal almost disappeared after some years from the market (www.kup.at/journals/jcbc/index.html).

■ Some Remarks about the Annual Meetings

The 16th Annual Meeting was held in Portorož in 2008 and organized by the Slovenian Society of Cardiology. It was the 3rd time that the AAAC annual meeting was organized in Slovenia. This meeting was a turning point with the largest number of participants up to then and with new standards in quality of lectures and organization, and with a new partner, our German colleagues who at that time officially joined AAAC.

In 2010, the 18th meeting was held in Vienna exceptionally in autumn, whereas traditionally the meetings had been held in June.

Between 2011 and nowadays the AAAC annual meeting had and has to fight with reduced interest of the industry and accordingly with permanent financial problems. This was partially solved by joining the meeting with other local or international congress activities, which guaranteed a high number of participants and a wider range of topics. Perfect examples for a re-increase in audience and an increasing quality of education and science were the meetings in Hungary, Croatia and Slovenia in the last few years.

In 2016, Vienna (for the 4th time in Austria) is host of the AAAC meeting and as already in the past, the time of the meeting had to be moved from June to April in order to combine AAAC with a well developed international conference, the **Update in Rhythmology**.

■ Current Organization and Future Perspectives

The executive and scientific committee (The international Alpe Adria advisory board) is composed of three delegates of each Alpe Adria member countries. The delegates of the respective national society are responsible for the organization of the next annual meeting. The president and the secretary of this meeting are at the same time the active president and secretary of the AAAC for one year.

It is essential that joint projects and research is discussed and led by the experts from the region. Results should be presented at annual AAAC meetings and the best of them should be proposed for the annual ESC meetings.

Based on the multiple changes and increasing, mainly financial, difficulties to organize the annual AAAC meetings the statutes of AAAC should be discussed, if necessary re-written, and accepted by the AAAC member countries. Also a new logo should be created. Moreover, there is still the wish to create a new „AAAC Newsletter“ and to find a new official publication organ for AAAC, eventually both with the same publisher.

■ Mission for the Future

Despite the increasing organizational problems, AAAC has still the same mission for the future, as was the mission in the past:

- Organization of annual meetings with special regard to providing opportunities for young cardiologists to present their work and results to an international professional forum.
- Promotion and support of science and education in cardiology for benefits of public health in the Alpe Adria region, the middle European countries
- Coordination of multicenter, clinical and basic studies in cardiology and related subjects, through the executive and scientific committee of AAAC

Following these proposals, we believe that there is no reason for pessimism, as we see still a lot of possibilities for collaboration and activities, especially with the active involvement of our younger colleagues. Through all these activities, which are based on collaboration, respect and friendship, the quality of our work for the benefit of patients will increase. In turn, this might lead to a better recognition of cardiovascular medicine in the Alpe Adria region and also make our work and results in Europe and worldwide more visible.

Our final words reflect the starting motto of AAAC: **“In the middle of Europe, in the middle of the heart”**.

Univ.-Prof. Dr. Miran Kenda

Founding Member and Honorary President

Univ.-Prof. Dr. Kurt Huber

AAAC President 2016

for the International Alpe Adria Association of Cardiology

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