

REPORT ON THE BONN ANNUAL MEETING

(9th -12th September 2010)

The 51st Annual Conference of the Anglo-German Medical Society was held this year in Bonn, where the "Burschenschaft Alemannia" provided us with a beautiful and unique venue right on the banks of the Rhine. The Alemannia Fraternity House was the location for the scientific programme as well as the communal evening meals, and its imposing dining hall also enabled the Annual Dinner to be celebrated in fitting style. The participants arrived one by one and met up at the House for the first time on Thursday evening where they enjoyed a buffet supper and presentation on the fascinating history and development of the student fraternity.

For some years, the conference has followed a set programme; one day devoted to the subjects of health policy, doctor training, comparison of the healthcare systems or similar topics, another day dedicated to a particular area of medicine – focussing on the similarities and differences of the approach in the two countries - whilst the Sunday and last day of the meeting is traditionally reserved for "Miscellaneous topics". In recent years these have ranged from a report from the doctor to the German Olympic Hockey Team, to the emergency provision of medical care in the war zone of Kosovo as part of KFOR, and even a podium discussion with all participants, including those following the social programme, on the theme of terminal care.

This year's conference opened on Friday with the theme of communication. After being taken through the neurophysiological basis of perception by Dr. Uebach, Bonn University, Dr. Nicola Haller told us about communication theories and more specifically about communication techniques used to educate diabetic patients about their disease. In the second part of the day, speakers from Great Britain and Germany described the training of medical students in their respective countries. Participants continued the discussion in small groups in the afternoon.

Saturday was dedicated to ENT subjects. Prof. Kempf from Wuppertal spoke to us about new surgical possibilities for treating deafness and we learned from Mr. A. Banerjee of the James Cook University in Middlesborough that snoring can reach a loudness of up to 111 dB – just under the pain threshold of 130 dB! Incidentally, the record holder is a woman. Lecturer Dr. Bücheler from Bonn University then discussed rhinitis and other allergies and was followed by Dr. Ludwig from Siegen, who gave us an overview of the diagnosis and treatment of facial malignancies.

On Sunday, speakers from both countries addressed the question "Who do I really work for?" We all know that in recent years, universal pressures on healthcare budgets have caused every area of medicine to suffer restrictions. Examples of these imposed limits on our activities were described in a trenchant and vivid manner by Dr. Steffens, a surgeon at the Witten-Herdecke University and Dr. Williams, Child Psychiatrist from Stockton-on-Tees and provoked an intense discussion.

Alongside the scientific programme, the chance to discover Bonn was not something to be missed. Those not involved in the scientific programme were able to take time for a leisurely tour, whilst delegates had to content themselves with briefer insights into the city's attractions. Although the meeting began on Friday in pouring rain, the

sun gradually prevailed and treated us to beautiful late summer weather. This meant that everyone could make use of the fraternity's garden overlooking the Rhine for discussions during breaks in the meeting. Over the years, many friendships have been struck among the members, so there is always much news to exchange. First-time participants were quickly made to feel welcome. Each day, the conference was rounded off by having supper together, and the more formal Annual Dinner, which, as every year, was accompanied by the witty speeches of the Presidents - was a particular delight. As always, the days flew quickly by, packed full of specialist medical presentations and discussions, visits to places of interest in Bonn, a reception by the City's Mayor, walks along the Rhine, a specially arranged bilingual tour around the House of German History and intensive personal exchanges of view with the other participants. A successful conference, which left everyone with a firm intention to meet again in Durham from 15th – 18th September 2011!

pictures from Bonn on our website