
EDITORIAL

Importance of the Neurootological and Equilibrimetric Society

A recent letter from a tinnitus patient in Australia caused me to pause and reflect on the Neurootological and Equilibrimetric Society (NES) and the need to share with our readers information from its recently concluded meeting in Bad Kissingen, Germany, March 14–17, 2002.

In 1992, Barbara Goldstein and I were invited by Professor Claus F. Claussen to join the NES and to present findings from our efforts to improve both tinnitus diagnosis and treatment. Professor Claussen expressed a sincere desire for us to collaborate in and formulate programs of treating tinnitus for future presentation at the NES. Invitations to join the NES were extended also to all professionals involved in tinnitology, both to those working in the basic sciences as applied to tinnitus and to those clinically involved in attempts to improve tinnitus diagnosis and treatment. This invitation was formalized in an original editorial that introduced our journal and welcomed readers to the first issue of the *International Tinnitus Journal* [1]. Both Dr. Goldstein and I accepted.

For readers who are not acquainted with this organization, the NES originally was organized by Dr. Claussen in 1974. Since its origin, its stated goals have been to further the specialty of neurootology, to enhance understanding of the sensations of smell, taste, balance, and hearing, and to explore the underlying, relevant basic science related to and clinical manifestations of these senses, both normal and abnormal. From the inception of the NES, membership has been open to professionals who work in any medical discipline and audiology and who are interested in neurootology and narrative sensology. At present, the organization's membership numbers in excess of 600 worldwide. Worldwide meetings have taken place for the last 28 years, providing an opportunity for members to present to an international audience those efforts undertaken in neurootology in their respective countries. The home base of the NES is Bad Kissingen, Germany, where the organization meets in alternate years. The officers and executive committee are elected by the membership. The faculty for each meeting is not selected but rather consists of members and nonmembers who wish to present their original clinical and research efforts in neurootology.

Since 1995, a special section of the program has been devoted to tinnitology. Dr. Claussen, president of the NES and professor extraordinarius for neurootology at the University of Würzburg, Germany, has demonstrated worldwide—with original contributions and presentations—a sincere interest in tinnitus. The organizational format of the NES has provided an open forum for the exchange of information pertaining to neurootology. The *International Tinnitus Journal (ITJ)*, the first peer-reviewed journal dedicated to the symptom of tinnitus, was accepted by the NES membership as its official journal. Individuals interested in membership in the NES are invited to join.

The recently concluded twenty-ninth annual meeting of the NES (March 14–17, 2002) demonstrated once again the sincere interest in tinnitus of this professional organization. (Copies of the program of this recently concluded meeting are available on request by writing to Neurootologisches Forschungsinstitut der 4-G-Forschung e.V., D-97688 Bad Kissingen, Germany. The thirtieth annual NES meeting, 2003, will be in Porto, Portugal.) The organizational format of the NES, in conjunction with publication of the *ITJ*, has allowed the compilation and rapid dissemination of information to our readers.

Significant contributions in tinnitology, both for diagnosis and treatment and for basic research, were presented at this latest NES meeting. The theme of the program was neurootology and disorders of smell, taste, balance, and tinnitus. A total of 115 presentations were made. Of these, 31 reports were devoted specifically to the symptom of tinnitus. For tinnitus diagnosis, presentations included the use of Doppler sonography, brain mapping, quantitative electroencephalography, nuclear medicine imaging techniques of brain single-photon emission computed tomography, and brain positron emission tomography.

A method of identifying the psychomotor component of tinnitus using craniocorpography was presented. *Craniocorpography* is a testing method for identifying vestibulospinal input of the vestibular system and its clinical manifestation by recording movement disorders of the head and neck. This modality can improve tinnitus diagnosis and form a

monitoring system for models of therapy in attempted tinnitus relief.

The clinical application of vestibular evoked responses and brain mapping for improving the accuracy of tinnitus diagnosis was updated and its clinical significance was reemphasized. Researchers introduced for clinical use the neck flexion, extension, and rotation test and its specific application to patients with complaints of hearing loss, tinnitus, vertigo, and ear blockage, alone or in combination after whiplash injury. Positive test results for vestibular testing in patients with tinnitus and their clinical utility were presented. Audiological testing with Cinnarizine, focusing on otoacoustic emissions, was reported for Ménière's disease.

For tinnitus treatment, positive results were reported for a receptor-targeted therapy directed to the GABA_A-benzodiazepine-chloride receptor. Competitive kinesiotherapeutic interactive therapy combining relaxation with exercises influencing the vestibulospinal component of the vestibular system was updated. The positive effect of a drug regimen including Piracetam was presented to the audience. Positive results of tinnitus retraining therapy also were reviewed. A new treatment modality — UltraQuiet therapy — directed to ultra-high-frequency stimulation for tinnitus was presented, and preliminary positive results from this technique were reviewed. A new method of outcomes analysis for tinnitus was introduced to the NES membership. In addition, medicolegal issues affecting tinnitus patients were updated. These and other presentations are scheduled to be published in upcoming issues of the *ITJ*.

The organization of the *ITJ* was expanded at the twenty-ninth NES meeting by additions to the editorial board of experts from South America, Europe, and India. Plans for an electronic format were finalized and will be available to the NES membership in 2002. The increased number of manuscripts received and accepted for publication in the *ITJ* is appreciated and is reflected in plans now in progress to expand the journal from a biannual to a triannual or a quarterly publication.

Our association with the NES since 1992 has resulted in the establishment not only of international professional relationships but of personal friendships that have contributed to our common goal of seeking a cure for all clinical types of tinnitus and relief for our tinnitus patients.

Science teaches us not only to understand the need

to report classic and orthodox methods but to be open to and to respect and publish — not fear — new ideas [2]. Presentations and publications are the NES method, even if some controversy arises. Legitimate scientific differences of opinion must be respected. For the discipline of tinnitology, which is in its infancy, neither the NES nor the *ITJ* has seen anything gained by efforts to discredit new ideas, particularly in advance of their presentation. The NES's policy of openness provides for the scientific process to perform and achieve what every tinnitus patient desires: a cure for every clinical type of tinnitus.

NES meetings have helped the membership to understand the exquisite balance that exists between tradition and change. It is science that helps us to understand why this is so. The NES has not been afraid of new ideas that, when presented by professionals to a conference of their peers, are entertained in an open discussion, the end result of which benefits both the professionals involved and their tinnitus patients. Here at the NES, the question of whether a paper should or should not be published is not asked. Rather, after a presentation has been made, repetition and reinterpretation occur in an open forum. The goal of the *ITJ* from its onset has been met: to put interesting, potentially important science into public view and to ensure for our readers the best possible publication through a peer-review system.

By providing an open and free discussion of new ideas, the NES has advanced both the new discipline of tinnitology and the growth and development of the *ITJ* for the ultimate benefit of tinnitus patients. Dr. Claussen's leadership in furthering the study of underlying mechanisms of tinnitus production and attempts to improve the accuracy of both tinnitus diagnosis and treatment deserves recognition and expression of appreciation from all professionals involved in this scientific endeavor.

REFERENCES

1. Shulman A. Introduction and welcome [editorial]. *Int Tinnitus J* 1(1):1–14, 1995.
2. Kennedy D. To publish or not to publish [editorial]? *Science* 295(8):1793, 2002.

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