

EDITORIAL

International Tinnitus Forum (ITF)— Annual Meeting, September 8, 2001

The annual meeting of the International Tinnitus Forum (ITF) on September 8, 2001, in Denver, Colorado, was marked by presentations reflecting advances in the discipline of tinnitology. This was the nineteenth consecutive annual meeting prior to the commencement of the American Academy of Otolaryngology—Head and Neck Surgery meeting attended by professionals dedicated to learning the state of the art of improving the accuracy of tinnitus diagnosis and treatment. The group, initially designated the International Tinnitus Study Group, has since 1995 been called the ITF. The meeting was sponsored for the first time for continuing medical education credit by the Office of Continuing Medical Education of the Health Science Center at Brooklyn, State University of New York (HSCB-SUNY).

The program of basic science and clinical medicine provided to attendees state-of-the-art information for improvement of accuracy in tinnitus diagnosis and new innovative directions for treatment. The theme of the meeting continued the new focus on neuroprotection. All presentations were excellent.

A. Stracher, Ph.D., professor and chairman of the department of biochemistry at HSCB-SUNY, presented results of animal investigation of the neuroprotective effect of leupeptin to counter the ototoxic effects of gentamicin. The clinical application for tinnitus prevention and treatment is encouraging.

A. Shulman, M.D., professor emeritus of clinical otolaryngology at HSCB-SUNY, presented results of therapy directed to a specific biochemical receptor, GABA_A/benzodiazepine/chloride. It is a receptor-targeted therapy for a particular central-type tinnitus, the results of which support the hypothesis of a GABAergic mechanism in the clinical course of severe disabling tinnitus. The duration of tinnitus control, which ranged from 4 to 6 weeks to 3 years, was reported by 90% of tinnitus patients who completed the protocol. Sequential single-photon emission computed tomography of brain imaging studies in 10 of these patients who completed the protocol revealed objective evidence of increased brain perfusion, which supports the reported subjective improvement.

Claus F. Claussen, M.D., professor extraordinarius of the University of Wurzburg, Germany, presented his

original contribution related to whiplash injury and tinnitus. He presented a method of objectivity both for the diagnosis and monitoring of therapy with a test known as computerized craniocorpography (CCG). This is a significant contribution to neurotology, both for diagnosis and treatment, and has clinical implications—particularly for whiplash patients—for diagnosis, treatment, and medicolegal issues.

Carol A. Bauer, M.D., associate professor and program director, department of otolaryngology, University of Southern Illinois, presented “Using an Animal Model to Study Tinnitus” and demonstrated the efficacy of gabapentin, a GABAergic drug for tinnitus control. Interestingly, the results in an animal model support the findings reported in the clinical paper presented by Shulman for tinnitus control with a receptor-targeted therapy—gabapentin and klonopin directed to the GABA/benzodiazepine/chloride receptor. Such animal models for tinnitus, which parallel the evolving tinnitus clinical experience, are expected to hasten the shared goal of all of us who are involved in tinnitus diagnosis and treatment: to find a cure for all clinical types of tinnitus.

The guest of honor was John M. Epley, M.D., of the Portland Oregon Otologic Clinic. The presentation, “Lidocaine Testing and Treatment of Tinnitus Clinical Experiences,” was innovative and is considered a significant contribution to otology and neurotology. Intratympanic therapy with lidocaine and steroids is not a new method of treatment. We are witnessing a reintroduction of treatment methods introduced originally in the 1930s, which offer to patients and to professionals a revived method for attempting to provide relief for inner ear complaints of hearing loss, tinnitus, vertigo, and ear blockage, alone or in combination. The presentation and the method recommended for trying lidocaine alone or in combination with steroids in one or both ears provides a basis for treatment specifically for a predominantly cochlear-type tinnitus and a direction for investigations both in animals and humans for inner ear symptoms highlighted by vertigo and tinnitus.

W. H. Slattery III, M.D., of the House Ear Clinic, Los Angeles, California, presented “Intratympanic Drug Therapy—A Protocol for Investigation and Treatment.” All who attended were reminded of the need for the de-

velopment of protocols for investigation and treatment to maximize the benefit and reduce complications of this technique.

The clinical reports of C. A. Oliveira, M.D., professor and chairman of the department of otolaryngology of the University of Brasilia, Brazil; G. J. Gianoli, M.D., associate professor, department of otolaryngology, Tulane University, New Orleans, Louisiana; and M. D. Seidman, M.D., department of otolaryngology, Henry Ford Hospital, Detroit, Michigan, presented the results of "Intratympanic Drug Therapy" for inner ear complaints of hearing loss, tinnitus, and vertigo. The results, both positive and negative, support the need for parallel efforts of basic science and clinical medicine to develop protocols for investigation and clinical application for different drug delivery systems and different drugs, in an attempt to control inner ear complaints of hearing loss, tinnitus, and vertigo.

D. J. Weider, M.D., professor of otolaryngology, department of otolaryngology, Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center, Lebanon, New Hampshire, presented an update of his original clinical observations and reports

of tinnitus control with lumbar puncture. The results are significant, both for diagnosis and also for basic science, in an attempt to understand the underlying cochlear physiology and the role of the blood-labyrinth and brain-labyrinth barrier.

All members of the faculty of this meeting have been invited to prepare manuscripts, summaries, or abstracts of their presentations for publication in the *International Tinnitus Journal*.

Attendees were invited to the next annual meeting of the ITF scheduled for San Diego, California, on September 21, 2002. It will mark the twentieth anniversary of the group. The guest of honor will be Dr. Claus F. Claussen. The meeting will focus on the role of the vestibular component of the cochleovestibular system for tinnitus, and the diagnosis and treatment of inner ear complaints of hearing loss, tinnitus, and vertigo with intratympanic drug therapy using different drug delivery systems.

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