



A triumph in Dublin: The 33rd Annual General Meeting of the Association for European Paediatric Cardiology. June 10–13, 1998

Eric Silove (President), Otto Daniëls (Secretary General)

IN RECENT YEARS, A NEW TRADITION HAS BEEN established of starting the Annual Conference with a day organised by the various workshops of the Association. The Working Groups organise two or three parallel sessions throughout the day. These now reach a very high scientific standard, and serve to educate the members of the Association by means of a series of informative talks. At this meeting the Fetal, Morphology and Imaging Working Groups took the unusual step of having a combined meeting. There were excellent symposiums on atrioventricular septal defect, and on Ebstein's malformation. Ideas and research were both supplemented and complemented. All Working Group Meetings reached a very high standard, and were both scientifically informative and well attended.

The official opening of the Congress was an auspicious occasion. The President of the Irish Republic, Mrs Mary McAleese, opened the Congress and displayed a deep understanding and appreciation of the practice of Paediatric Cardiology and Cardiac Surgery and its rewards. Her speech is published below. The warmth of her personality was demonstrated when she was later presented with a bouquet by children who had been treated surgically in Dublin (Fig.). She was thanked by the President of the Association, Eric Silove, who drew a parallel between the process of negotiating peace in Ireland with the unity of purpose of our Association in trying to establish Paediatric Cardiology as a monospecialty in the European Union.

The interesting Scientific Programme attracted the largest attendance of any Congress of the Association for European Paediatric Cardiology.

There were over 450 registered participants. The activities were enhanced by the usual attendance of distinguished colleagues from other continents. In addition, the admission of cardiac surgeons, and other medical scientists, to the membership of the Association, provided new dimensions to the meeting. The Mannheimer Lecture, delivered by Dr Elliot Shinebourne dealt with the timely question of legal and ethical issues in relation to innovations in our Specialty. It is published in its entirety elsewhere in this issue. There were outstanding State of



The two children, with surgically treated complex congenital heart disease, present President Mary McAleese with a bouquet of flowers

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the Art Lectures" by Dr C Mullins on Stents, Dr R M Ward on Pharmacology Applied to the Fetus, and Mr W J Brawn on Hypoplastic Left Heart Syndrome. The abstract sessions were all judged to be of a very high standard.

The new Constitution resulted in some profitable meetings of the new Advisory Professional Committee and the Advisory Scientific Committee. The Advisory Professional Committee consists of an elected nucleus of the Board of National Delegates and is chaired by Otto Daniels, the Secretary General of the Association. A Secretary to the Committee was elected, namely Michael Godman, who has also now become Secretary of the Board of National Delegates. This Committee will concentrate on the setting of standards for training, and will present guidelines for training institutes, and for the accreditation of Congresses and courses for Continuous Medical Education. The Advisory Scientific Committee is chaired by

Marc Gewillig, Scientific Secretary of the Association. Its members are the chairpersons of the Working Groups. Their main function is to prepare the Scientific Programmes of the Annual General Meetings and of the paediatric portion of the European Society of Cardiology.

We now anticipate a major contribution from our surgical and scientific colleagues, both in terms of abstracts for presentation at future meetings, and also in producing ideas for the construction of our Scientific Programmes. The increasing influence of the Association in the European Union might provide a helpful platform for Paediatric Cardiac Surgeons to develop their own needs in Europe.

The message from the recent meeting is loud and clear. Paediatric Cardiology and related Specialties together form an important and strong force in Europe. The road is open to develop and strengthen those relationships.

Remarks by president Mary McAleese

On the occasion of the opening of the Annual General Meeting of the Association for Paediatric Cardiology on Thursday 11th June, 1998

I would like formally to welcome you to this year's annual conference. I would particularly like to extend a warm welcome to the many overseas delegates who have come – not only from our neighbours in Europe – but from Canada, the United States and from the Far East. I have no doubt that quite a number of you are visiting for the first time – and you will have realised by now that we don't have much control over our weather!

Your annual conference was last in Ireland in 1971, and so it is a particular honour for me to have been invited to officiate at this – the 33rd conference – and let me say how grateful I am to Desmond Duff, Chairman of the Organising Committee, for affording me this honour on your behalf. I know that you have a full programme of working sessions, presentations and lectures, covering the many topics and disciplines that impinge on the whole vital area of paediatric cardiology. Occasions like this usually mean a lot of hard work, both for delegates and presenters, as new information is shared and analysed, and views and ideas are explored. I commend all of you on taking the time out from your busy schedules to be here in Dublin for this conference – for having the openness of mind, the intellectual curiosity, and the professional humility needed to advance scholarship and research – and to ensure your discipline remains fresh and vital.

Caring for the sick can so often be a thankless task – a job which can be demanding, frustrating and exhaustive. The happy expectations of parents of new born infants can so quickly turn to worry, fear and anxiety – as they face into a child's serious illness, and carry the double burden of caring for their new born child – and seeing them suffer so helplessly. Your professions know of the great burden this is on parents – and of the need for swift action or intervention to address the needs of those unfortunate infants and their parents. I want to take this opportunity to acknowledge the tremendous service that you give – your dedication and commitment to the care of the most helpless – as they struggle in their early hours and days – when the treatment they receive at that tender age can so profoundly impact on their lives – and the lives of those who love them. It is your professionalism – steady and sure – which offers welcome reassurance and help.

The conference which we are opening this morning covers many aspects of your work – and is an opportunity to meet many other professionals in this important area of medical care and treatment – and to share current thinking and developments in the different disciplines. With the tremendous advances in medical science and pharmacology – life expectancies for infants are continuing to improve – and the prospects for a better quality of life for those who are in your care are increasing with every new development. Expectations are also growing. Things which defeated you a short time ago are no longer insuperable.

But as technology provides answers and solutions – your task gets more and more complex –

and is constantly in need of critique and review. Over the next few days you will have an opportunity to do just that – and to share ideas, insights, problems and solutions. It is an opportunity for those of you who work in specific disciplines to explore the interconnectedness of your related professions – and to pool your talents and skills – away from the daily bustle of your ordinary but vital work. The quality of treatment that you give is

directly related to your willingness to be open – to embrace change – to critique and amend – to try out new ideas and to learn.

In opening the conference, I want to wish all of you well in your deliberations. I hope you have an enjoyable and fruitful conference, discussing the new possibilities your work can offer to those who rely on your care, your professionalism and your dedication.