

The 34th Conference coordinators and managers of rheumatology clinics and outpatient clinics

Warsaw, 20–21 May 2015

The leading organizers of the meeting were the Institute of Rheumatology and the National Consultant of Rheumatology and the Warsaw branch of the Polish Society of Rheumatology. The event was held under the patronage of the journal *Reumatologia*.

The first day of the conference, devoted to systemic issues, was held in the building of the Ministry of Health. The meeting was attended not only by rheumatologists, but also by the representatives of the Ministry, of the National Health Fund and of the Office for Registration of Medicinal Products, Medical Devices and Biocidal Products, as well as by experts on health issues. The Director of the Institute of Rheumatology, Dr. Piotr Bednarski, opening the conference, expressed the hope for further development of cooperation between the Institute and the Polish Society of Rheumatology. The Director addressed the problems of modern rheumatology – the inconsistency of the current rheumatology education and a need for the introduction of specialization in pediatric rheumatology – and the importance of the presently discussed project of Law on Public Health (photo 1).

The latter issue was also presented by Beata Małeczka-Libera, the Secretary of State in the Ministry of Health. She drew attention to the fact that, for the first time in present history, funding for prevention, health promotion and education will be included in the health care system.

Disease prevention, early diagnosis and prevention of complications of rheumatic diseases were discussed by Prof. Brygida Kwiatkowska. She also outlined the objectives of the proposed project of changes in the comprehensive rheumatologic outpatient care system. The aims of these changes are the improvement in the situation of patients coming into first contact with rheumatology and the increased efficiency in use of available resources.

The basis for the above-mentioned project lies in the creation of Centers for the early diagnosis of arthritis, enabling quick access to experienced rheumatologists and early qualification of patients suspected of having inflammatory joint diseases. In the case of these patients, early diagnosis and start of treatment greatly improve the chances of disease remission, leading to delaying or even avoiding patients' disability altogether. The current system of rheumatologic outpatient care is inefficient due to, among other things, the involvement in care for the large number of patients with osteoarthritis, who should be treated in the primary care setting. Rheumatology clinics should instead be focused on long-term and comprehensive care of patients with inflammatory diseases of the joints.

Among the issues addressed during the conference, the controversy surrounding drug programs B.33 and B.45 for patients with rheumatoid arthritis was presented. The new rules to specialize in rheumatology within the newly created modular system of education were hotly debated. Particularly highlighted was the problem

of no provision in the new system for pediatricians to further specialize in rheumatology. It is known that in Poland there are very few specialists in developmental age rheumatology and this problem requires an urgent solution. Jolanta Orłowska-Heitzman, the Director of the Department of Science and Higher Education of the Ministry of Health, who participated in this discussion, indicated the need of change of the current rules.

Dr. Andrzej Śliwczyński – a representative of the Department of Analyses and Strategies of the National Health Fund – presented data on direct costs which arise on the side of the public payer and which are generated by diseases



Photo 1.

of the musculoskeletal system and connective tissue, covered by M00-M99 ICD-10 codes. He cited that in 2014 the total sum of expenditure amounted to nearly PLN 4.2 billion, which is a value three times greater than that of analogical expenditure in the year 2004. The need for the development of health demand maps was also discussed during the conference. Dr. Jerzy Gryglewicz presented the principles of such mapping and drew attention to the particular role that provincial consultants for particular specialties, including rheumatology, should play in their formation. He also stressed the fact that the needs of the health demand maps have become the basis for contracting services by the National Health Fund.

In the evening of the first day of the Conference the Gala took place in the Primate's Palace in Warsaw, at which awards of the journal *Reumatologia* for the best original articles published in 2014 were presented. Awards were sponsored by the Polish Society for Rheumatology. Prizes were awarded by: Professor Anna Jędryka-Góral, the Editor in Chief of *Reumatologia*; Eugeniusz J. Kucharz, the President of the Polish Society of Rheumatology; Igor Radziejewicz-Winnicki, the Secretary of State in the Ministry of Health; and Jolanta Orłowska-Heitzman. The Golden Pen of *Reumatologia* for the article "Late sequel of systemic lupus erythematosus in children" was awarded to Małgorzata Wierzbowska, Piotr Gietka, and Lidia Rutkowska-Sak. The Silver Pen of *Reumatologia* for the work "Optimism, pain coping strategies and pain intensity among women with rheumatoid arthritis" was awarded to Zuzanna Kwissa-Gajewska, Marzena Olesińska, and Anna Tomkiewicz. The Bronze Pen of *Reumatologia* for the manuscript "Bone metabolism in patients with mucopolysaccharidosis type II" was presented to Zbigniew Żuber, Agnieszka Jurecka, Anna Król-Zdechlikiewicz, Agnieszka Różdżyńska-Świętochowska, and Anna Tylki-Szymańska (photo 2).

On the second day of the Conference, which was held at the Institute of Rheumatology, the lectures addressed numerous scientific research and clinical issues: the biological treatment of rheumatoid arthritis, RA management during remission, the effectiveness of biological agents in the treatment of vasculitis, the diagnosis, treatment and imaging in sacroiliac joint pain syndromes and current issues concerning spondyloarthropathies. Listeners also had the opportunity to learn of new developments in the treatment and diagnosis of gout and how to manage pregnant patients with rheumatic diseases (photo 3).

The conference was intended to integrate Polish rheumatologists and enable dialogue with managers and health services. The aim of the annual meetings of the Ministry of Health and of the Institute of Rheumatology is to draw attention to the contemporary problems of rheumatology and their importance among other medical specialties. We hope that through the discussion and the presentation of these events in the media these objectives have been achieved.



Photo 2.



Photo 3.

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