The Czech Society of Nephrology – An Introduction

Dear Colleagues,

It is a great pleasure for me to briefly introduce the Czech Society of Nephrology on the occasion of its affiliation with *Kidney and Blood Pressure Research* which is to become its official journal. Let me outline its history and achievements.

The origins of the Czech (or Czechoslovak) Society of Nephrology date back to the 1950–60s and are closely related to the activities of its founders – Professors Brod, Schuck, Válek, Erben, Opatrný, and Jirka and Dr. Chytil.

The seminal person of Czech nephrology was undoubtedly Prof. Jan Brod (1912–1985). After graduation he worked in 1938 in the laboratory of Prof. Eppinger in Vienna and then after World War II in London with Prof. Pickering and in the United States in the laboratory of the famous renal physiologist, Homer Smith. He returned to Prague in 1947 and brought back with him the lifelong interest for renal physiology and pathophysiology and the role of the kidney in the regulation of blood pressure. He founded the First Division dedicated to nephrology in the 1st Department of Medicine of the 1st Medical Faculty of Charles University in Prague. In 1951, he became director of the Institute for the Disorders of Circulation in Prague. In 1968, he actively participated in the ‘Prague Spring’ and after the Soviet invasion emigrated to West Germany where he continued his research and educational activities as a professor and chief of the Department of Medicine at the University of Hannover until his death. Jan Brod was a man with a high international reputation. In 1962, he was president of the 2nd International Congress of Nephrology held in Prague. The scientific activity of Jan Brod concentrated on the role of

kidney in hypertension, but he was also interested in the treatment of nephrotic syndrome with cytotoxic drugs, acute glomerulonephritis and pyelonephritis. In 1973, his monograph ‘The Kidney’ was one of the most successful textbooks of nephrology of the time, at least in Europe. Renal physiology and clearance studies remained the main interest of another important Czech nephrologist, Prof. Otto Schuck. His monograph ‘Examination of Kidney Function’ remains probably the best textbook concerning the application of clearance methods in clinical nephrology.

The first hemodialysis to be performed in Prague was in 1954 by Chytil and Daum with a modified Alwall artificial kidney in the 2nd Department of Medicine of the 1st Medical Faculty. The woman treated for sublimate intoxication survived, and up to the age of 90 she regularly participated in the anniversary meetings commemorating this important event. At that time, Prague was the only place behind the ‘iron curtain’ where artificial kidneys were available and patients from neighboring ‘socialistic’ countries were transported to Prague by helicopter to be dialyzed there. Chronic dialysis was also introduced in this department in the early 1960s and was soon followed by further dialysis units in Pilsen, headed by Prof. Opatrný, and in Hradec Králové, headed by Prof. Erben.

The first successful renal transplantation was performed in the later Institute of Clinical and Experimental Medicine in Prague in 1966 with the important contribution of Prof. Jirka. This was the beginning of the regular and expanding transplantation program in this Institute, succeeded by further transplantation centers in Pilsen, Hradec Králové, Olomouc, Brno and Ostrava.

Another important and internationally renowned person in the history of Czech nephrology was Prof. Albert Válek, who founded the largest dialysis unit in Prague in Strahov and contributed to the promotion of dialysis methods and care for patients with end-stage renal disease in the former Czechoslovakia. In 1978, he organized the EDTA Congress and in 1988 the ESAO Congress in Prague. He was a member of the editorial boards of several international journals, including *Clinical Nephrology* and *Blood Purification*.

The predecessor of the later Czech Society of Nephrology was the nephrological section of the Czech Society of Internal Medicine which was formed shortly after 1950 by Brod, Chytil, Jirka and others. The first president of the Czechoslovak Society of Nephrology was Jan Brod, further presidents were Otto Schuck and Albert Válek. In 1993, the Czech Society of Nephrology was formed, its first president again being Prof. Schuck followed by Prof. Vladimír Teplan.

In Czechoslovakia in the 1980s, little progress was made in the field nephrology, for example, in 1989 only about 50 persons per 1 million inhabitants were dialyzed, and patients with systemic diseases affecting the kidney (including diabetes) and persons older than 50 years were excluded from the chronic dialysis program. Since then, however, there has been a tremendous development in nephrology again. The number of dialyzed persons has increased to almost 350 per 1 million inhabitants, the number of dialysis units to more than 80 and there is now no limitation in access to chronic hemodialysis. The Czech Republic today belongs to those countries with one of the highest annual rates of renal transplantation in Europe, with 40 transplanted persons per 1 million inhabitants annually. Unfortunately,

some problems have remained and others have emerged. Peritoneal dialysis is still underdeveloped in the Czech Republic, i.e., only about 5% of dialyzed patients are treated by CAPD. The dialysis population in the Czech Republic is becoming older and older, with 46% patients treated by hemodialysis being 65 years and over. Diabetic nephropathy now represents 33% of all causes of end-stage renal disease treated by hemodialysis. The Czech Society of Nephrology would like not only to remember the great tradition of nephrology in the country, but also keep or achieve European standards in both clinical nephrology and other modes of renal replacement therapy. In recent years, Czech nephrologists have increased their scientific activities and have published their findings in prestigious nephrology journals, including *Kidney International*, *Nephron*, *Nephrology*, *Dialysis*, *Transplantation*, etc. The Czech Society of Nephrology organized in Prague in 1998 the Danube Symposium on Nephrology and in 1999 the Annual Meeting of the International Society of Blood Purification and Congress of the European Society of Pediatric Nephrology. Joining *Kidney and Blood Pressure Research* will help us to further promote all these activities, especially experimental and clinical research, and it is completely in keeping with the planned membership of the Czech Republic in the European Union in the near future. The German Society of Nephrology, in particular Prof. Lang, and S. Karger Publishers are acknowledged for their help. I hope that our participation will contribute to the further development and success of *Kidney and Blood Pressure Research*. Prof. Vladimír Tesař, President of the Czech Society of Nephrology 1st Department of Medicine, Charles University U nemocnice 2, CZ-128 08 Prague 2 (Czech Republic).