Further Section


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Congressus Otolaryngologicus Prague 1964
Phoniatria et Audiología

A Czechoslovak Otolaryngological Congress with international participation discussing the problems of phoniatics and audiology was held in Prague under the presidency of Professor M. Seeman, M.D. from October 5-10, 1964. 429 specialists from 20 countries took part. The Congress was attended not only by otolaryngologists, phoniatricians and audiologists, but also by speech therapists, teachers of the deaf, psychologists, phoneticians and electroacoustic specialists.

In an official report on the development of the voice, Sedlácková emphasized that the human voice is maximally adapted for communication. The development of voice manifestations is dependent on the development of the nervous function of the child and on the hearing of its own voice which brings into play the feed-back mechanisms necessary for the control of the voice. The development of the voice in the child was documented by the author by objective sound analysis from the first cries of the newborn to the stabilization of the formant pattern of the voice at the time of the forming of independent sentences. She then demonstrated sound tracings of early emotional expression in the voice and the first musical efforts of the child which are evident at a very early stage of development, and demonstrated some voice disturbances arising in infancy from copying incorrect voicing habits of members of the family. The similarity between the incompletely developed voice of the infant and the failing voice in old age due to a predominance of the marginal registers is interesting. The restriction up to the disappearance of the middle register in old age leads to uncertainty and sudden breaks in the voice (Vrticka, Sedláčková, Supáček). Further papers dealt with the factors determining the quality of the voice (Flach, Smith), the histology and metabolism of vocal muscle (Behrendt, Berendes, Klajman, Moser) and the influence of mutation and its disorders (Naidr, Secík, Zbofil).

In the second official report, Kmíl suggested a new classification of functional dysphonias based on the pathophysiological and functional clinical picture and the sound character of the voice changes. Hirschberg, Paulinec and Kirschbach dealt with the prevention of dysphonia.

Yermolagev et al. attempted to define the limits of toleration of singing load. Siegert found a high incidence of voice disorders in nursery school teachers associated with noise up to 70-90 dB in the school. Gundermann gave a report of the success of a combination of spa treatment with voice reeducation in teachers suffering from voice disorders due to overstrain. Zbofil, Biećański and Domarński discussed the results of EMG and laryngographic examinations in functional dysphonias and Maximov, Réthi and Troshanov reported on the treatment of spastic dysphonia.

In the official report on the aetiopathogenesis of stuttering and cluttering Seeman spoke about changes in the previous theories associating these speech disorders exclusively with psychogenic factors. Major trends today are looking for their pathogenesis in organically conditioned...
functional disorders of central nervous system. According to Seeman, stuttering is divided into three groups: 1. purely psychogenic, 2. on the basis of brain-injury in early infancy, 3. developed from cluttering originally present. The basis of the clinical symptomatology of stuttering is a constitutionally based disturbance in the predominance of cortical over subcortical mechanisms. This has also been confirmed by the Prague school of phoniatrics by the demonstration of changes in autonomic nervous activity in stutterers. Cluttering is characterized not only by rapid speech but by general precipitate movements. It can now definitely be considered to be a speech disturbance based on organic changes in the central nervous system. Pathological EEG findings, particularly a positive hyperventilation response in clutterers and different reaction with delayed auditory feed-back in stutterers and clutterers, were demonstrated by Lango and Morávek from the Prague Phoniatic Research Institute. Daute and Gane et al. also gave reports on the results of EEG studies in stutterers and clutterers. Böhme pointed out the importance of brain-injury in early infancy in stuttering. Łączkowska and Suhrweher reported on the development of speech in stutterers. Schilling, Trojan and Vlasoua dealt with their own methods of treatment. Specialists from Eastern Germany headed by Becker reported on educational problems with stuttering children in schools.

The second part of the Congress was devoted to problems of audiology. In the official report Sedláček discussed new observations on the impedance of the middle ear and drew attention to the importance of examining directional hearing for the diagnosis of conduction deafness and particularly of central deafness. He further emphasized the concept of hearing as an information system, which does not differentiate sounds according to their physical composition but determines the source of the sound, how it arose and how the source is situated in space. According to Sedláček’s theory, the main function of the cochlear is to analyse the timbre of the sound which carries its informative quality. Hearing loss should be evaluated complexly and expressed as loss in information capacity in bits/sec. Another paper by Sedláček and Soukova dealt with artificial middle ear–middle ear prostheses made from plastics—and is an original contribution to the rehabilitation of middle-ear deafness. The next papers were directed to the diagnosis of cochlear hearing defects (Faltýnek, Hlaniček, Jankowski et al., Preobrazhensky) and central hearing disturbances (Chládek, Maspitéiol, Matzker, Supáček).

The final official report was devoted to hear-training. By the term Brohm understands all factors including speech-training, which are inseparably bound up with hearing. Even the healthy child undergoes “hear-training”: while learning to recognize reality it learns to differentiate the sound symbols of speech. Children with hearing defects should acquire the same hearing knowl-

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edge in the same time interval and sequence as hearing children and must learn not to articulate but to speak. It is not merely necessary to use residual hearing but also sight and touch perception. Dactylology is a useful aid but only serves to exactify sound analysis and not for communication. The education of deaf children should be done in the medium of the home only complemented by training in special institutes. The next papers dealt with the early detection of hearing defects, particularly measurements of tone response in the human fetus and hearing tests in the newborn and in young children (Bystrzanowska, Jasienska, Perello, Slaninoua, Wedenberg) and the methods of hear-training (Bruno, Constant, Chulliat, Croatto, Handzel, Lafon, Perdoncini, Portmann).

The 119 papers were supplemented by 11 films, scientific demonstrations and a scientific and industrial exhibition.
The importance of the Congress was emphasized by the presence of the Minister of Health of Czechoslovakia, Dr. / Plojhar, under whose auspices the Congress was held, and of the President of the International Association of Logopedics and Phoniatrics, Professor L. Croatto, M.D. Karel Vrticka, Praha.