Congress of the German Society of Transfusion Medicine and Immunohematology – 50th Anniversary

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In 2017 the German Society for Transfusion Medicine and Immunohematology (DGTI) holds its 50th annual meeting. It takes place from October 24, to October 27, 2017 in Cologne. Since the very first conference in 1954, S. KARGER Publishers has been a long-standing contributor as scientific publisher to these congresses, which took place only bi-annually until 1993 [1]. From the beginning with a short interruption the abstracts and proceedings of the meetings were published in *ACTA HAEMATOLOGICA*, later in *INFUSIONSTHERAPIE UND TRANSFUSIONSMEDIZIN*, and currently in *TRANSFUSION MEDICINE AND HEMOTHERAPY* as the official organ of the DGTI. In this tradition it is appropriate to reflect upon the past, presence, and the future of this collaboration.

The annual congress of the DGTI is a regular gathering of several hundred – or even thousands – of physicians, scientists, health workers, students, individual guests, and company representatives from Germany, Austria, and Switzerland working in the field of transfusion medicine. The congress usually lasts 4 days and has several simultaneous sessions held in German or in English. Main topics of the sessions are quality and safety of blood products, therapy with blood components and plasma derivatives, blood donation and donor vigilance, immunohematology, transfusion-related questions in transplantation and immunogenetics, cell therapy and stem cell manipulation, therapeutic and diagnostic problems of hemostasis as well as legal aspects of the GMP-compliant production and application of blood products, cell therapeutics, and tissue preparations. While the congress convenes to discuss a variety of different scientific issues, the local organizing committee regularly focuses on one or two main subjects for the major plenary sessions in order to highlight these hot topics. As the DGTI is regarded as a multinational German-speaking medical society in the middle of Europe, the so-called ‘Neighbor Day’ was established in order to open the meeting for contributors from neighboring countries with simultaneous translation from the respective national lan-

guages. The society convenes at a variety of places all over the three countries. In addition, an industrial exhibition with booths and lunch meetings by leading pharmaceutical, immunobiological, IT, and medical device companies completes the conference.

TRANSFUSION MEDICINE AND HEMOTHERAPY was founded in 1973 by KARGER who is a globally acting medical and scientific publisher and is published in six issues annually both in print and as freely available online issue. The journal is devoted to all areas of transfusion medicine and related disciplines. Both, comprehensive reviews and primary scientific publications that detail the latest findings in transfusion medicine and hemotherapy promote the international exchange of knowledge within these disciplines. Consistent with this goal, continuing medical education is also specifically addressed. Over the last 10 years, the impact of the journal has risen significantly, and it is now one of the leading European scientific journals in this field. It is distributed in print to all members of the DGTI and also accessible online. In addition, members of the DGTI receive the German journal *Transfusionsmedizin* which serves as continuing training for physicians, technicians, and nurses on a quarterly basis. With the development internet-based formats, e.g. web-based seminars, this dual policy of congresses and journals for our society members might be questioned. Are regular scientific meetings such as the annual congress of the DGTI still state of the art, or will they be replaced by other formats in the future? Do medical conferences make sense, and if so, why [2]? For sure, we cannot predict what the future will offer us technically in 15–20 years, but for the time being nothing can replace the personal interaction between speaker or poster presenter and the audience.

A big conference such as the annual congress of the DGTI is a forum in its original Latin meaning. It is a marketplace of ideas and thoughts which brings together people with different backgrounds and experience. Young scientists for example can submit their very

first results in a written form. They undergo a formal review process and are subsequently published in a special abstract issue of TRANSFUSION MEDICINE AND HEMOTHERAPY [3, 4]. They are invited to present their data by poster or even by giving an oral presentation. This experience is demanding: it is much more difficult to summarize scientific findings in a presentation of 10 or 12 min than to give a 25-min talk! This training effect and the influence on a future scientific career cannot be overestimated. And even for the most experienced presenter a challenging discussion at a meeting can either be delightful or burdensome. In this context, the Editor in Chief of TRANSFUSION MEDICINE AND HEMOTHERAPY will present the journal during a breakfast meeting and will advise young scientists how to write or to review high-quality scientific papers. For the journal editors on the other hand such a congress is always an excellent forum to detect new developments and to motivate researchers to submit their original data and to identify the most experienced writer for an invited review article.

Therefore, scientific communication of our society members and continuous medical education ideally are composed of both the direct interaction and the personal exchange at our conferences

as well as the continuous studying of our medical journals. Furthermore, the DGTI as a medical society for transfusion medicine will continue to offer intermediate meetings of our nine sections which might be developed further and even promoted specific up-to-date information and consensus seeking online.

At the 2017 meeting in Cologne, we will bring into focus the safety of blood supply. This comprises not only infectious agents and diseases but also potential immunological side effects of blood transfusion (hemovigilance). Special attention will be paid to the availability of blood products and the question of donor safety (donor vigilance). A German-Dutch Neighbor Day and joint sessions with the German Society for Anesthesia (DGAI), the German Society of Hematology and Oncology (DGHO), the German Stem Cell Network (GSCN) and the Society for Hemostasis (GTH) will complete the scientific program.

We are very much looking forward to seeing you in Cologne in October for the annual congress of DGTI and hope you make use of the articles published in TRANSFUSION MEDICINE AND HEMOTHERAPY!

References

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