

## In the news

### UNITING EUROPE THROUGH NEUROLOGY

The European Union might be looking a little shaky right now, but there were no signs of disharmony at the 2nd Congress of the European Academy of Neurology (EAN), which took place in Copenhagen, Denmark from 28–31 May 2016. Since its formation through a merger of the European Neurological Society (ENS) with the European Federation of Neurological Societies (EFNS), the EAN has endeavoured to foster a spirit of unity, and the congress highlighted ways in which European neurologists can collaborate to tackle the most pressing issues in neurology today.

Speaking at a press conference, Gunhild Waldemar, the Director of the Danish Dementia Research Centre, urged researchers to work together to compile standardized guidelines for the early identification and treatment of Alzheimer disease. “European science could play a leading role, providing that it adopts a concerted approach and sufficient funds are made available,” she said. “While research is expensive, standing by helplessly is even more so.”

Early diagnosis of Parkinson disease (PD) was also high on the congress agenda. The prestigious Moritz Romberg Lecture was given by Eduardo Tolosa from Barcelona, Spain, who focused on the prediagnostic phase of PD as a possible window of opportunity to test disease-modifying interventions. In a press release, the EAN President, Günther Deuschl, stated that PD is the fifth most expensive neurological condition for Europe’s health systems, thereby underlining the importance of preventing disease progression at an early stage.

Another issue that loomed large was the imminent threat of Zika virus (ZIKV) in Europe. According to Hugh Willison from the University of Glasgow, UK, “ZIKV is a global challenge that will get much closer to all of us over the coming months.” Raad Shakir, President of the World Federation of Neurology, challenged the perception that ZIKV is only of concern to pregnant women: “we need to be aware that infected persons are also at risk of developing serious neurological conditions such as Guillain–Barré syndrome, myelitis or meningo-encephalitis ... the full spectrum of neurological complications from this viral infection still remains unknown.”

Fittingly, the congress showcased the vital contributions of Danish research, including notable achievements in the collection and analysis of registry data. A study from Aarhus, involving 479,021 children, found evidence of a link between prenatal exposure to antiepileptic drugs — in particular, valproate — and deficits in school performance. Aarhus was also the setting for a nationwide register-based study of Charcot–Marie–Tooth disease, which generated the first incidence and mortality estimates for this condition.

Finally, on a lighter note, the congress had some good news for football fans. Contrary to previous reports, Cláudia Borbinha and colleagues from Lisbon, Portugal found that the stress of watching a crucial football match was not associated with a significantly increased risk of stroke. These findings should provide reassurance to fans who are planning to lend vigorous support to their teams at EURO 2016.

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