The International Multidisciplinary Thyroid & Parathyroid Meeting

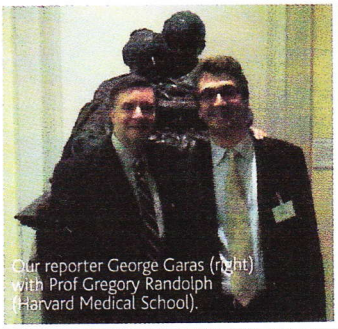
Date: June 16-17th, 2011. **Venue:** The Royal College of Surgeons of England, London, UK. **Report by:** George Garas, BSc(Hons), MBBS(Dist), MRCS(Eng), DOHNS, Core Trainee 2 in Otorhinolaryngology and Head & Neck Surgery, St Mary's Hospital, Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust, London, UK.

The first International Multidisciplinary Thyroid & Parathyroid Meeting proved a great success. Organised by a multidisciplinary committee consisting of an Otorhinolaryngologist and Head & Neck Surgeon (Mr Neil Tolley, St Mary's Hospital – Chair), an Endocrine Surgeon (Mr Fausto Palazzo, Hammersmith Hospital) and an Endocrinologist (Dr James Ahlquist, Cleveland University Hospital) it addressed all aspects of thyroid and parathyroid disease. These ranged from basic science and genetics to medical and surgical management of endocrine and neoplastic diseases as they relate to the thyroid and parathyroid glands. Topics such as medico-legal aspects of thyroid surgery, revision surgery, genetic screening of relatives for familial syndromes and novel treatments were also presented and discussed. Case presentations and a round table discussion were held at the end of the first day where delegates were given the opportunity to ask world authorities difficult questions from their clinical practice.

The multidisciplinary nature of the meeting was reflected by the fact that both the faculty and delegates originated from various backgrounds including otorhinolaryngology and head & neck surgery, endocrine surgery, endocrinology, medical oncology, clinical oncology, pathology and medical genetics. Furthermore, the meeting was truly international with both the faculty and delegates attending from all over the world.

The faculty assembled was second to none, consisting of the greatest names in Thyroid & Parathyroid Surgery in the international setting. These included Profs Gregory Randolph (Harvard Medical School, USA), Ashok Shaha (Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center, USA), Leigh Delbridge (Sydney Medical School, Australia) and Paolo Miccoli (Pisa Medical School, Italy).

Mr Neil Tolley (centre) who co-organised and chaired the meeting with members of the faculty and delegates.



Our reporter George Garas (right) with Prof Gregory Randolph (Harvard Medical School).

The turnout was outstanding (more than 200 delegates on both days) and the lecture programme very carefully structured with the first day devoted to thyroid disease and the second day to parathyroid disease. The meeting proved a huge success as illustrated by the delegates' feedback who in their majority found it 'extremely educational and very stimulating'.

Web: www.aesculap-academia.co.uk/
Next meeting: To be confirmed (in 2 years' time).

Tissue Engineering in the Auditory System: paving the way from basic science to clinical practice

Date: 2nd June, 2011. **Venue:** The Royal Society, London, UK. **Report by:** Douglas EH Hartley MBBS, DPhil, FRCS(ORL-HNS), Associate Professor and Consultant Otologist, Nottingham Universities NHS Trust, Nottingham, UK.

SPONSORS: Action on Hearing loss (formerly RNID), British Society of Audiology, European Academy of Otology and Neuro-Otology, European Science Foundation, MEL-EL, Advanced Bionics and Cochlear.

This conference aimed at clinicians and scientists was organised by Gerard O'Donoghue, Marcelo Rivolta and the Ear Foundation to disseminate research and foster advancements within this promising field. The meeting opened by welcoming attendees, including the guest of honour, Richard Ramsden. The first speaker, Robin Ali, described retinal repair via transplanted photoreceptor cells. He showed morphological evidence that transplanted cells integrate with host retinal cells and, compellingly, behavioural evidence of visual restoration in mice. Helge Rask Anderson introduced the mammoth task facing tissue regeneration within the auditory system. Through electronmicroscopy, he showed normal cochlear ultrastructure and neuronal morphology in stunning detail. Subsequently, Andrew Forge gave a realistic overview of the complexity and diversity of cochlear reorganisation following hearing loss. Robert Shepherd then described the rapid loss of spiral ganglion cells (targets for cochlear implants) following deafness. Interestingly, he suggested that exogenous neurotrophins infused into the inner ear, in conjunction with cochlear implants, may increase neural survival. Marcelo Rivolta discussed potential benefits of auditory stem cells using a model of auditory neuropathy. He found morphological evidence of regeneration of ectopic ganglia, and a positive correlation between partially-recovered auditory brainstem responses and cell survival.

Yuichi Ito discussed drug delivery to the cochlea, including the application of IGF-1 to the round window using hydrogels to protect against hair cell loss following noise exposure. Alessandro Martini speculated about the bright future for nanoparticles for cell and drug delivery to the cochlea. The final speaker, Andrej Kral, described adaptation to hearing loss and cochlear implants within the central auditory pathway. He showed the auditory brain can respond to other sensory modalities following deafness, and suggested a causal link to 'supra-normal' visual abilities amongst deaf individuals. The day was concluded with a lively round table discussion chaired by Alain Uziel.

Compared with progress within the visual system, it seems that regeneration as a potential treatment for hearing loss still has many barriers to overcome. For the foreseeable future cochlear implants seem here to stay and, if tissue regenerative therapies are to be used in clinical practice, initially, it seems likely that they will be an adjuvant to auditory prosthetics, rather than a replacement therapy.

After the meeting, drinks and dinner were served in the Hunterian museum and the council room of the Royal College of Surgeons, respectively. The venue added to the sense of occasion, and provided a formal backdrop to informality of the speeches.

For further information please contact Sue Archbold, Chief Executive, The Ear Foundation, Tel: 0115 942 1985 Email: Sue@earfoundation.org.uk