

THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL ORTHOPTIC CONFERENCE

BERNE 1979

The 4th International Orthoptic Conference was held in September this year in Berne, the seat of the Government of Switzerland, a truly delightful city set around the river Aare, midst beautiful scenery.

The meeting was held in the Kursaal, one of Berne's public buildings, on a hill overlooking the city. Scientific sessions took place in a large semi-circular hall with ample, comfortable seating around tables. Other functions were held in surrounding rooms and general facilities were excellent. The Swiss authorities encouraged us to enjoy our stay and provided free public transport throughout the city for all delegates. This was particularly helpful as the 1,000 participants (from Australia to Yugoslavia) were scattered all over the city in 41 hotels.

Australia was well represented by 34 participants (ophthalmologists and orthoptists). It was particularly pleasing to see some of our newer graduates had made the effort to attend this meeting.

Scientific papers were given during morning and afternoon sessions for three days in either English, French or German with simultaneous translation available to delegates via earphones. Film sessions ran simultaneously and it was often difficult to decide whether to listen to the papers, have coffee (which also ran simultaneously in another hall) or watch the films. The quality of the films was particularly good and one hopes that some of these films will be available to orthoptists at a later date.

This congress marked the first Burian Lecture in honour of Dr. Herman Burian, the distinguished American Ophthalmologist who died just before the 3rd International Orthoptic Congress in 1975. Dr. Gunther von Noorden introduced Nancy Capobianco of Italy who gave this inaugural lecture — her topic was "Points of view about sensorial adaption in strabismus". Nancy is the first ever Professor of Orthoptics.

Then followed a short session on Nystagmus and another on Surgery during which co-author Shayne Brown read Prof. Billson's paper on "The surgical management of vertical deviations". The Margaret Fitton Memorial Lecture was given by Joyce Mein (U.K. and one of our distinguished honorary members) entitled "Dissociated vertical divergence and its association with nystagmus".

Joyce gave an excellent paper and her delivery was a lesson to us all — slides, clarity of theme and timing. As always, we can learn a great deal from her. Joyce is also the Chairman of the Permanent Scientific Committee of the International Orthoptic Association and she must be congratulated on the very good scientific section of the Berne Meeting. Her balanced choice of papers presented, shows her keen knowledge of factors both political and scientific.

On Tuesday afternoon 3 hours was set aside for Amblyopia — Diagnosis and Treatment. A very important session. Various methods of treatment were reported including Dr. H. Maclean and Mary Carter's paper on their routine of miotic therapy. Some of you may have heard an early version of this paper at our Singapore meeting.

Ruth Banks and Fay Barnett gave us further insight into their new, alternative method of treatment of amblyopia. Win Barnard, from Moorfields Electro-physiology Labs in London showed us some surprising effects of occlusion on the visually evoked response, in amblyopia.

There appears to be good evidence to show that occlusion of the immature eye may have extremely serious, far reaching effects. As orthoptists we must keep abreast of the new knowledge which is coming from the neuro-physiologists, for the ultimate benefit of our young patients. We, in the clinical setting, must try to understand these new concepts and utilise them. Since the work of Hubel and Wiesel, the advance of knowledge concerning binocular function, amblyopia and the relationship of spatial frequency and contrast

sensitivity to visual acuity has so changed our work in orthoptics that we must now have a much deeper understanding of the physiology of vision and cerebral function if we are to be worthy of a place in the team of specialists in the field of eye care.

Wednesday morning's papers were on Neurology and Incomitant Strabismus including an interesting paper on "Ophthalmoplegic migraine of childhood and adolescence. A disorder of 3rd, 4th and 6th cranial nerves", from Canada. This was followed by a group of papers on "Development and Developmental Disorders" which included Vivienne Gordon and Linda McKenzie's very good paper on "Disorders of ocular motility in patients with spina bifida". Vivienne gave us a foretaste of this in Singapore at our last conference; you may recall her excellent slides. The morning concluded with a session of Electrophysiologic Studies.

During Wednesday afternoon, Binocular Vision was the first theme and Mary Wesson's paper on sensory function was extremely interesting. Her use of the Lee's adaption of the Hess screen examination suggests that a wider use of this technique would be of advantage.

Next followed papers on Divergent Strabismus under the able chairmanship of Barbara Lee (Secretary General of the International Orthoptic Association). We hope to welcome Barbara to Australia next year at our meeting and the International Orthoptic Association meetings. "Factors influencing the surgical result of divergent strabismus" was the title of Dr. Frank Martin's interesting paper, the co-authors of which were six staff orthoptists at Sydney Eye Hospital. This paper illustrated the happy result of a team effort.

Thursday morning opened bright and clear with delegates still keen and eager for more; the

first topic was Diagnostic Tests. Papers ranged from the Bielschowsky head tilt test to the controversy between atropine and cyclogyl for refraction of esotropic children; from tests on the phase difference haploscope to the evaluation of various tests for stereopsis. Our paper (Dunlop and Neill) "Exploring the spatial and temporal parameters of stereopsis" was read during the session. This paper introduced a new type of test for stereopsis which demonstrates the difference between global and central stereopsis, and also includes the time element.

The morning session continued with papers on "Treatment":— the use of prisms, the consequences of lens implantation for unilateral cataract, surgical treatment of esotropia and exotropia, etc. One novel line of treatment was the use of botulin injected into the extra-ocular muscle thereby temporarily controlling the deviation.

One criticism voiced by several delegates — speakers and participants alike, was the lack of printed abstracts of the papers in the programme. This would have made it easier to choose whether one should listen to the papers or watch the films at any specific time.

An extensive trade exhibition was held in an adjacent hall with all the well known British, American and Continental instrument houses showing the latest equipment, including some new stereo tests and another near vision test for children with reading matter structured to maturity level.

On the whole, the congress was a great success both scientifically and socially and the organisers are to be congratulated on their efforts.

The 5th International Orthoptic Conference is to be held in Cannes (South of France) in October 1983.

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