

18. Prague 2003

The 18th annual International Workshop on Surfactant Replacement was held in Prague in 2003. It was only the second time the workshop had been held in a post-communist country, the year before the entry of the Central and Eastern European countries into the EU and indeed, these countries are increasingly becoming members of the "Curosurf Family".

More than 230 participants from all continents took part in the workshop. Prague with its historical, cultural and architectural uniqueness as well as the typical Czech hospitality provided a stimulating and inspiring environment.

The invited speakers created the traditional framework of the workshop with some excellent guest lectures. Martin Post from Toronto summarized current concepts of lung development with emphasis on the genetic control of lung growth, development and maturation. Colin Morley from Melbourne presented the 6th Nils W. Svenningsen Memorial Lecture, discussing resuscitation of very premature babies and showing that our current standard practices could be harmful and should be modified. Eric Shinwell discussed current dilemmas of postnatal steroid therapy for chronic lung disease and concluded that the guidelines of the American Academy of Pediatrics and the Canadian Paediatric Society provide the most realistic, balanced advice for the neonatal community. Invited speakers from Stanford USA, Marlene Rabinovitch and Richard Bland, dealt with hot topics such as chronic lung disease and presented excellent data from their laboratory research in this field. David Field from Leicester, UK could not attend because of a family illness and his talk was given by Henry Halliday who summarized the evidence-base for the clinical use of inhaled NO in both term and preterm infants. Richard Plavka from Prague, Czech Republic, spoke about animal trials evaluating interactions between different kinds of ventilatory support and the surfactant system and their consequences for clinical practice.

There were 18 oral presentations and 12 poster presentations. These covered many aspects of the endogenous surfactant system as well as replacement and therapeutic interventions. The Proceedings of the Workshop were published in *Biology of the Neonate* 2003; 84: 1-41 [18].

The meeting and accommodation was in the Hilton hotel, which is on the right side of the Vltava river, close to the Old Town. The Gala dinner in the Ball Games House, a Renaissance building with graffiti decorations situated in the Royal Garden, was greatly enjoyed by everyone. A short walk from Queen Anna's Summerhouse through the Royal Garden before the dinner provided an unusual, exciting southwestern view of the rear of Prague Castle with the dominant gothic St Vitus Cathedral lit up at sunset. A boat cruise along the historic parts of Prague, the Lesser Town with Prague Castle on the left and the Old Town on the right side of the Vltava river, offered a pleasant experience with relaxation and refreshment. The farewell dinner in the Monastic Brewery Restaurant was followed by singing and dancing until late.