

## Highlights and Key Aspects of the „European Stroke Conference“ 2015 – presented by Conference Chairman Prof. M. G. Hennerici

**Vienna.** For the 25th time physicians of various medical fields who engage themselves in stroke research – such as Neurology, Internal Medicine, Intensive Care und Rehabilitation – are meeting at the “European Stroke Conference “ (ESC) 2015 from 13 to 15 May, 2015.

Conference Chairman M. G. Hennerici, Director of the Neurological University Hospital Mannheim of Heidelberg University, is one of the founders of one of the largest stroke conferences worldwide which takes place in Europe with yearly congresses since 1990. In the following interview Prof. Hennerici provides an insight into the highlights and key aspects of this year’s ESC in Vienna as well as into the challenges of an innovative, future-oriented, near-fundamental und clinical research in this field.

1. Prof. Hennerici, you are one of the founders of the “European Stroke Conference” which by now has been taking place for the 24th time with yearly congresses throughout Europe since 1990. Which objectives in reference to stroke research have been achieved so far?

**Prof. Hennerici:** *“In the last quarter of a century we have succeeded in reducing the consequences and complications of acute stroke in the industrialised nations by a specific therapy (iv Thrombolysis and Stroke Unit Management) dramatically. In addition a reduction of stroke incidences by up to 80 % and of cardiac-stroke-vessel diseases by up to 60 % could be achieved by change of lifestyle and better risk factor modulation. The mortality rate of stroke patients in the US and Europe have been reduced by one third.*

*The Plenary Session 4C is in authority of the countries of Middle and South America – a traditional mutual event of the Pan-American Federation of Neurological Societies and the ESC: Stroke burden, resources and management in developing countries.”*

2. Which wish and goals do you – as the Conference Chairman – connect with the ESC 2015? What is your personal orientation of the conference and what is your main focus this year? Which challenges have you set for yourself for the following years?

**Prof. Hennerici:** *“This year we are focusing on aspects of the future in several symposiums - which so far have been discussed insufficiently or not at all – due to the lack of corresponding foundations of the comprehension of complex repair processes of the brain and its functioning at an advanced age. In the meantime this has changed fundamentally and we can now rely on experimental and clinical pilot studies and ask: Which strategies are available – compared to previous knowledge - to integrate the by far more effective plasticity of the brain and its ability to compensate lesions temporarily or permanently into our treatment strategies? Which periods of time are relevant - or – which different age-related mechanisms require a differentiated selection amongst new learning processes, changes in strategy or network modulations? We have invited several international leading researchers to our symposiums to answer these questions: Reorganisation after stroke (Symposium 4) – The promise of neurorecovery from stroke: from molecules to networks (Plenary Session 5, a mutual symposium of the European Stroke Research Foundation ESRF and the ESC) – Penumbra reperfusion (Symposium 3). In addition a mutual meeting with the European Federation of Neurorehabilitation and the ESC is taking place (Plenary Session 4A).*

***These symposiums are highlights of the Viennese Congress and they are discussing future strategies on top level of research!***

***A further main focus will be put on the ultrasound as a diagnostic and therapeutic instrument in Vienna in the anniversary year of the conference after 25 years:***

***Sonothrombolysis Update 2015 (Symposium 9): TOP researchers from the US and CANADA have been able to generate an incredible financial and institutional research support and will now demonstrate to a long-lived European domain of clinical research, what seems to be available in the near future for practical application, when suitable appropriation and highly motivated and skilled scientists meet: Only a few workgroups – to mention our own Mannheimer Research Group with S. Meairs – are able to keep up with this high level: A real Highlight of the ESC!“***

3. Are there any changes in the structure and itinerary of the ESC? How about sponsors?

***Prof. Hennerici: “Besides highly attractive and numerous innovative topics of the Viennese ESC we will trial several new meeting types and I look forward to the reaction of our participants: The Stroke News Today are to provide current topics in concentrated form for discussion (Inflammation and stroke, Botulinum toxin and stroke treatment, Stroke and oncology as well as Nutrition and dysphagia). An Expert Roundtable is to put controversial recurring topics in a nutshell and to take a chance on therapeutic proposition beyond guidelines – if those for a variety of reasons are just not to be expected in the future as well. On this topic a new communication forum will discuss different perspectives (Plenary Session 3): Large clinical trial reviewed...what is possible? What not? Are the over many years well tended and fostered large clinical trials and meta-analysis are still up-to-date? Are they able to answer our questions for the future at all when often decades have passed until you have to realise that unfortunately the study approach - dating back a (too) long time (and often being obsolete) – could not be successful....?“***

***Meetings for nurses, physiotherapists and speech therapists (AHPs) will be integrated into the main programme by popular request – just as Teaching Courses, whereby we accommodate the current needs of our participants for concentration, efficiency and cost reduction and save a whole conference day. This is also owing to the economy measures of the industry, which unfortunately from our base in Germany for the first time was not prepared to lobby for a better stroke care and to contribute actively on an international basis; for this reason it appears that a traditionally strong representation at the ESC for 25 years will be lost in spite of/due to strong international competition which luckily is prepared to take this place.“***

4. Scientists from all over the world are exchanging their knowledge about new therapies and stroke care. Which current innovations are to be expected with interventional resp. surgical procedures?

***Prof. Hennerici: “In the past months several clinical studies were published - which on the contrary to numerous similar studies from the last 10 years - are providing data to highlight the benefits of a thrombolysis supplemented by an interventional thrombectomy of a large occluded cerebral artery as a cause of ischemic stroke. Quality and design of these studies differ immensely in parts and numerous, also critical questions which have been posed after the publication at the beginning of 2015, have not been answered so far. With representatives of various fields we will present a preliminary update at a huge Symposium Endovascular treatment of acute stroke: News and perspectives; we will also ask critical questions relating to the assessment of this data and discuss the importance of the study results in case of implementation into the clinical management (Plenary Symposium 2).***

***For several years we have not discussed a certain topic which will now be attended to at two symposiums with outstanding neurosurgeons from Japan, Europe and North America – Management of ruptured and unruptured aneurysms – the latest experimental and clinical study***

**results relating to pathobiology, natural history and pharmacological as well as interventional/neurosurgical therapies (Symposium 7A and 7B).**

**In contrast the never-ending discussion of Asymptomatic carotid disease seems to be less attractive: We will therefore seek the direct intensive exchange with the participants of the conference in the new meeting and communication style, the EXPERT ROUNDTABLES and will discuss the question of the management beyond secure guidelines controversially – chances and disappointments on this topic will also be addressed in the Plenary Session 3.”**

5. Which new aspects of stroke prevention are to be expected with an always aging population? Keyword “personalised stroke management” – to which extent are you able to implement concepts of individualised customised therapy? What is the role of interdisciplinary conferences?

**Prof. Hennerici: “With an increasing life expectancy of our population and the growing success of new therapies of other life threatening diseases already known in the middle decades, danger of acute stroke of people between 75 and 80 is growing: prevention, management in the acute stage and the necessary further measures therefore encounter complex comorbidities: This applies to a new future topic: Stroke and oncology as well as Personalised management which we will present in Stroke News Today – Teaching Course – Symposium 5 (Large clinical trials: Translation to clinical practice) for the first time.**

**Also shared disease factors and comorbidities at an older or younger age - where frequency of stroke against all expectations increases – were only addressed marginally at previous stroke conferences: The concept of stress and emotions is the heading of a traditionally mutual symposium of the European Society of Cardiology and the ESC (Plenary Session 4B), which will also be repeated at the yearly conference of the European cardiologists in London with modified perspectives.”**

6. Stroke care makes high demands on interdisciplinary medical collaboration. Which areas could be improved? What role does the factor time play?

**Prof. Hennerici: “Interdisciplinary cooperation has led to substantial improvements of the individual stroke care: according to imaging procedures (Symposium 1).**

**- Epidemiological examinations with large population groups have contributed to develop diverse strategies of prevention and management with heterogeneous preconditions worldwide.**

**- Neuropsychiatric and behavioural changes after the stroke are a very important topic, particularly with the special types of circulatory disturbance of small cerebral arteries which we have offered at symposiums over many years and which are currently pausing (Symposium 8 Neuropsychiatry and stroke).**

**First published results are available on the issue Time is brain: streamlining hyper acute stroke care – which were published in our business journal Cerebrovascular Diseases in December 2014 and which will be discussed at the conference at our own Plenary Session 6 with participation of international contributors from Europe, USA and Russia.”**

7. Well then? It matters.....

**Prof. Hennerici: “In Vienna we should not forget the issue of Stroke and the Arts: Symposium 6 is dedicated to the analysis of complex disease patterns with artists who have suffered a stroke – the consequences of such an incident for the artistic power and creativity should be addressed exemplary also for non-professional art lovers and enthusiasts – therapeutic approaches (how can music therapy be helpful for rehabilitation after a stroke?) will be discussed as well.**

***And there are yet two highlights to come which are first and foremost confidential: this year's grant of the 11. WEPPER AWARDS to an excellent clinical scientist who is worthy of this OSCAR of the ESC far in excess of his own discipline – and the SPECIAL LECTURE of another stroke scientist in the research centre of the USA, equally worthy of the OSCAR.***

***21 ESC AWARDS will be granted at the last day after the SPECIAL LECTURE to 21 colleagues who have submitted the best research work at our conference – followed by 21 junior researchers from all over the world who will receive a Travel Grant of the European Stroke Research Foundation ESRF enabling them to present and discuss their own contribution at the ESC in Vienna.***

***All guests are cordially welcomed in languages of more than 80 countries from which participants have enrolled and registered. You may look forward to extraordinary, eventful and globally connecting days in the East and West comprising city of Vienna.”***

Prof. Hennerici, thank you very much for the interview!

All information as well as the entire preliminary, daily updated and final scientific programmes can be found on the Symposium's homepage at [www.eurostroke.eu](http://www.eurostroke.eu).

Journalists are more than welcome to visit the ESC in Vienna and report about it. We are happy to arrange contacts for interviews! The accreditation can be obtained directly by approaching our press contact, Ms Kerstin Aldenhoff.

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