ESVD
EUROPEAN SOCIETY of VETERINARY DERMATOLOGY

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DERMATOLOGY IN GERMANY: PRESENT AND FUTURE

By Terrill Eckert (Germany)

Although one of the founding members of ESVD, Hans Koch, is from Germany, veterinary dermatology has still not been officially recognised as a speciality field by the Chambers of Veterinarians of the German States or "Laender". Most veterinarians, however, in private practice as well as in universities and institutions, recognise the need for professional training in dermatology.

With a population of approximately 86 million, Germany has five universities which graduate over 1,000 veterinarians each year. Readings, lectures and clinical demonstrations in dermatology centre mostly on the small animal clinics of these universities. At the University of Hannover, Ingo Nolte integrates dermatology in his internal medicine lectures. In Berlin, Frank Hamann, a postgraduate student working on a doctoral thesis, has published a series of articles on allergy and supplements students' training in dermatology. Manfred Kietzmann, Professor of Veterinary Pharmacology at the University of Leipzig and one of three full members of ESVD from Germany, is a front-runner in dermatology in the area and has worked especially on the subjects of topical therapy and glucocorticoids. In Muenchen, Wilfred Kraft, Professor for Small Animal Medicine and Laboratory Diagnostics, published recently results of on-going research in thyroid testing. As director of the Department of Internal Medicine, he integrates dermatological training in internal medicine. This same situation exists at the Justus Liebig University in Giessen, which I attended, graduating in 1980.

With five large universities teaching veterinary medicine in Germany, we might ask, "Why are there no formal programmes for dermatological training or for residents?"

The fact is that most professors are so overburdened with redundant administrative duties that they have little time to develop and supervise such programmes. Add to that burden the large number of students studying veterinary medicine and it is clear that the dynamics for veterinary dermatology in Germany are coming from: PRIVATE PRACTICE.

In the early 1980s, Hans Koch from Birkenfeld recognised the need for specialisation in veterinary dermatology in Europe at a very high professional standard. Together with Claudia von Tscharner, David Lloyd, Pierre Fourrier, Tom Willemse and Didier Carlotti, he founded the ESVD and, later, the ECVD. At the same time he formed with other colleagues in Germany the Arbeitskreis fur Dermatologie which attracted the interest of many of us who were just getting started in the profession.

From this humble beginning in the 1980s, the number of German veterinarians working extensively in dermatology has increased immensely. Some of the others not already mentioned are listed here, along with their work. Stephanie Peters assists Hans Koch and has recently given papers in Austria and co-authored a book on canine allergy. Renate Hammerling has worked on allergy testing, comparing allergens for intradermal testing from different sources; additionally she has investigated different methods for T4 testing. Barbel Beandi operates a histopathology lab for dermatology referral practices, and is comparing with others the validity and sensitivity of various ELISA-IgE tests. Christine Lowenstein has had articles published on black hair follicle dysplasia and feline miliary eczema. Ulrike Runge-Harms, in addition to her practice, is seeing referral cases from other veterinarians. Margot Fluhr is working with intradermal testing of horses, among other things.

So much for the present. But how do things appear for the future?

Due to the need for organised and co-ordinated training in dermatology in Germany, a group of ESVD members met in Hannover on 16th June, 1996, to set goals for future work and training. The group will organise dermatology meetings, workshops, co-ordinate clinical research and therapeutics, provide a forum for pathologists working in dermatohistopathology and push for recognition of veterinary dermatology as a speciality. To achieve this goal, the group has decided that only the high standards established by the ECVD can be accepted for specialisation.

To date, Germany has one diplomate in veterinary dermatology. With the enthusiasm that German veterinarians are showing for dermatology, this should increase greatly in the near future.

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Owing to a printing problem, some lines of type were omitted in your previous copy of the Bulletin (UK only). Please accept this corrected version.

ESVD SECOND WORKSHOP ON CELLULAR BIOLOGY OF THE SKIN, JUNE 1996

By Stephen White (UK)

Richenau is at the point where the two branches of the Rhine river meet as they flow from the Alps down towards the great northern plains of Europe. The Hotel Adler, where the course was held and where most of the course participants stayed, is right on the fork. So much so that the more intrepid of us were able to swim before breakfast in the hotel pool which overlooks the point of confluence.

The content of the lectures lived up to the superlative location. On the first morning, Maja Suter talked us through the basic structures of the epidermis as the cells make their way from the basal to the cornified layer. Brilliantly illustrated with slides taken from a children's picture book of the skin up to complex tables and diagrams illustrating the very latest in knowledge, her lecture held us all enthralled.

In the afternoon the practical class was every bit as interesting. We saw how keratinocytes can be grown in layers to mimic the epidermis in vitro; we had computer sessions to test our dermatohistopathological knowledge; and we had slide sessions to recap on the theory we had learned in the morning.

Robert Garrone, from Lyons, told us about the dermis and especially about its major component, collagen, on the second day. We learned about its structure, formation and the functions of the different types.

In the afternoon we went for a walk in the mountains above the village and were then given a guided tour of the Chateau by Claudia von Tscharner's brother. The historical details and anecdotes brought the area alive to us and our tour was rounded off with a tasting of the local wine. In the evening we enjoyed the Course Dinner which lived up to the culinary excellence we were pampered with throughout our stay.

The last morning was taken by Julie Yager who gave us a thorough and useful insight into skin immunity. We were led through the various components of immunity and the session was rounded off with the current view of mechanisms at work in contact hypersensitivity and atopic disease.

The days we spent in Switzerland gave us all a valuable and interesting insight into the cellular biology of the skin. The social programme and welcome arranged by Claudia von Tscharner turned the few days into a mini-holiday. My only amazement is that the course was not fully subscribed. I would say to those of you who did not go: make sure you don't miss the next one.

HAVE YOU EVER LOOKED AT GORILLA SKIN?

Professor John Cooper, recently working with gorillas in Rwanda would welcome any information relating to the skin of the gorilla, in health or diseased.
If you can help please contact him on
+44 (0) 1672 562965
or fax on
+44 (0) 1672 563833

PAYMENT OF ESVD DUES BY TRAVELLER'S CHEQUE

Keith Thoday and Dominique Heripret suggest a new method of paying the ESVD membership fee

Keith successfully paid his 1996 ESVD dues by a Thomas Cook Euro Travellers (MasterCard) traveller's cheque obtained for him by his bank from Thomas Cook Holiday Money Service. It was supplied written in ECU and the commission he paid on it was £2.00. This compares with:

1. **Bank transfer – £17.00 in addition to the subscription**
2. **Bank draft – £7.50 in addition to the subscription**
3. **Eurocheque – £10.00 in addition to the subscription**

The traveller's cheque required countersigning twice by the payee and making payable to the European Society of Veterinary Dermatology.

Dominique (ESVD Treasurer) adds that this method of payment is acceptable, but since ESVD does have to pay a fee, members paying in this way must pay ECU100 instead of the usual ECU90.

POINTS FROM THE LITERATURE

By Professor Thierry Olivry, North Carolina State University

Immunotherapy with allergen mixtures

Song, C.H., Heiner, D.C. (1995) Successful replacement of allergen-specific immunotherapy by allergen-mixture therapy. ***Annals of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology*** **5: 402-8.**

The purpose of this study was to compare the efficacy of allergen-specific (only allergens reacting via testing) and allergen-mixture immunotherapy (relevant and irrelevant pre-mixed extracts) in 20 human patients suffering from allergic rhinitis and asthma. Symptom-medication scores for all patients improved at the end of specific therapy and remained improved during mixture therapy. Skin sensitization to irrelevant allergens occurred in five patients during mixture therapy. These patients also experienced spontaneous conversions from negative to positive reactions to allergens not included in the mixture, indicating allergenic cross-reactivity or increase in skin reactivity. In the present study, allergen-mixture immunotherapy appeared as effective as allergen-specific therapy.

Immunoglobulin a bacterial cleavage in children with atopic dermatitis

Husby, M.K., Host, A., Halken, S. (1995) Increased proportions of bacteria capable of cleaving IgA1 in the pharynx of infants with atopic disease. ***Pediatric Research*** **38: 182-6.**

The principal mediator of specific humoral immunity at mucosal membranes of the body is secretory IgA. Clinical evidence suggests the association of atopic disease with permanent or transient IgA deficiencies. The purpose of the present study was to study if there could be an increased number of bacteria capable of destroying IgA in children with atopic disease. In children 18 months of age without signs of atopic disease, a median of 9% of the nasopharyngeal bacteria showed IgA1 protease activity. IgA1 protease producing bacteria were encountered significantly more frequently in children with atopic diseases (median 36%; range 14-64%, p<0.0005).

The results support the hypothesis that IgA1 protease-producing bacteria in the pharynx may transiently jeopardize the local immune barrier and facilitate the penetration of allergens resulting in atopic disease.

Decreased corticosteroid receptor binding in atopic dermatitis

Clayton, M.H., Leung, D.Y.M., Surs, W., Szefler, S.J. (1994) Altered glucocorticoid receptor binding in atopic dermatitis. ***Journal of Allergy and Clinical Immunology*** **96: 421-3.**

In human patients with atopic dermatitis, with or without asthma, decreased dexamethasone binding to peripheral blood mononuclear cells was observed. This reduced binding affinity was associated with decreased inhibitory effects of methylprednisolone on stimulated T-lymphocytes and cytokine production by these cells. This alteration seems to be an acquired defect that follows incubation of the cells with IL2 and IL4. The authors speculate that decreased steroid receptor binding affinity in atopic diseases might blunt the anti-inflammatory response to endogenously secreted cortisol and thus be important in the perpetuation of chronic immune activation and allergic inflammation. This may account also for the variable therapeutic response to steroids.

Adrenal ultrasonography is useful in the diagnosis of canine pituitary-dependent hyperadrenocorticism

Kaserbotz, B., Saunders, H.M. (1995) Ultrasonography of the canine adrenal glands. ***Schweizer Archiv für Tierheilkunde*** **137: 258-64.**

This paper illustrates the method for evaluating adrenals with ultrasonography and discusses normal adrenal ultrasonographic appearance as well as that of various adrenal diseases.

Barthez, P.Y., Nyland, T.G., Feldman, E.C. (1995) Ultrasonographic evaluation of the adrenal glands in dogs. ***Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association*** **207: 1180-3.**

Adrenal ultrasonography was compared between 20 healthy dogs, 20 dogs with non-endocrine disease and 22 dogs with untreated pituitary-dependent hyperadrenocorticism (PDH). In normal dogs and dogs with non-endocrine disease, there was a significant linear relationship between adrenal gland length and body weight, aortic diameter and kidney length. Dogs with PDH exhibited a greater length and diameter of the adrenal glands compared to that of dogs from the other groups. When using the measurement of the left adrenal gland as a diagnostic test for PDH, sensitivity was 77% and specificity was 80%.

Horauf, A., Reusch, C. (1995) Visualisation of the suprarenal glands by means of ultrasound examinations in healthy dogs, in dogs with non-endocrine diseases as well as in dogs with hyperadrenocorticism. ***Kleintierpraxis*** **40: 351.**

Measurement of the size of adrenal glands was assessed between 20 healthy dogs, 18 dogs with non-endocrine disease and 10 dogs with PDH. There was no significant difference in length and diameter of the adrenals in normal dogs and dogs with non-endocrine diseases. These measurements were significantly greater in dogs with PDH than those of other groups. The ratio left kidney length:adrenal gland diameter was lower in dogs with PDH than that of other dogs. The ratio left kidney length:adrenal gland length was not different between dogs with PDH and those of other groups.

Allopurinol monotherapy in canine leishmaniasis

Vercammen, F., De Deken, R., Kageruka, P. (1995) First evaluation of the use of allopurinol as a single drug for the treatment of canine leishmaniasis. ***Vlaams Diergeneeskunde Tijdschrift 64:*** **208-14.**

Eleven cases of canine leishmaniasis were treated with allopurinol at the dosage of 5 mg/kg three times daily. All dogs became asymptomatic during allopurinol treatment (in general after two months) and showed no side-effects. In nine dogs, allopurinol therapy led to a decrease of serology titres, even though the titres did become negative. In two dogs, interruption of therapy was followed by a rise in serology titres. ■

Letters to the editor...

THE AGM OF THE ESVD

Dear Sir,

I was extremely disappointed with the last AGM of the ESVD at Edinburgh. This meeting provides the single opportunity for interaction between members and the committee but again this chance was missed.

As in Rome, the AGM was squeezed into a short break at a large meeting when there was just time for the committee to give their reports but no chance for members to add to the meeting.

This was shown most clearly in the distribution of research grants. I was unaware of the intention to use the Society's money for this purpose and considered it a matter which could perhaps have been put to the meeting for a vote. The meeting then heard that the committee couldn't decide which applicant to give the grant to and so had doubled the amount of funds to be given. What happened to the talk of making the society more democratic? Perhaps the money would be better spent offering dermatology teaching facilities to less affluent countries in Europe.

My request is that the AGM becomes a better forum of exchange and debate, taken seriously by the hosts, the committee and the members so that the ESVD can continue to go forward.

Neil Smart (UK)

Dear Neil,

On behalf of the ESVD Board, I will try to address your points.

1. AGM schedule and time

The AGM schedule has largely been beyond our control. ESVD and ECVD share the AGM meeting with the local organising board and it is they, not ESVD Board, who plan the details of the programme. There are several events which compete for programme time, principally components of the scientific and social programme. The AGM traditionally gets squeezed between these. One could argue that the meeting would not be taking place if ESVD/ECVD were not participating so perhaps we should be more positive in our demands for time in which to hold an AGM. I can tell you that the outline programme for Maastricht '98 allows 90 minutes for the AGM.

2. Structure of the AGM

Given that Board members have to give a short summary of their activities throughout the year and that the Treasurer and Membership Secretary have specific roles to perform there is not a lot of time left for a structured debate. If the membership wished we could try to ensure that all reports were in the Annual Report. This would free-up time and the Board members could take questions, rather than read a report. We would, of course, be dependent on Full Members remembering to take their Annual Report to the AGM.

In addition we could canvass for topics to be added to the agenda and the proposer of each topic could summarise such suggestions to the AGM. Decisions could then be made by vote. Minutes would be published in the Annual Report.

3. Grants for Research Awards

Article 2 of the ESVD Constitution mandates the ESVD to further scientific progress in veterinary and comparative dermatology. How is scientific progress to be made without research? If we don't fund it, who will? Governments are withdrawing as sponsors and in general industry will only be keen to support clinically relevant, particularly product related, research.

Major grant donators have had to become the prime supplier of support for large research projects into basic science. However, this does not preclude ESVD from supporting smaller projects which are seen to have scientific worth. If research is not performed, then journals and meetings become vehicles for case reports and reviews and our science does not advance. Furthermore, without research we cannot advance our ability to deal with disease.

4. Accrual of funds

It is reasonable and right that the use of funds be questioned. The current Board, and its immediate antecedents, have managed to keep the annual membership fee increase below the level of inflation and have resolved the problems of communication which so bedevilled the society until recently. We have also tried to keep other costs down. Furthermore, we have now begun publishing the annual accounts in the Annual Report.

It is only very recently that ESVD has been in a position to accrue a surplus, albeit small. Even this surplus is a result of the overwhelming success of the Barcelona meeting rather than an increase in real income. Other revenues, from journal sales for example, may bring about occasional income but the hard reality is that we do not have enormous reserves. We are actively looking for industry to support some of our costs, for example the cost of producing the Bulletin, but as yet we have had no firm invitation.

5. Use of funds

Article 2 of the ESVD Constitution mandates ESVD to support and encourage education in veterinary dermatology and to this end we produce a journal and hold workshops in basic dermatologic sciences, neither of which are mandated to make a profit. Indeed, many workshops make a small loss. Offering dermatology teaching facilities such as scholarships, subsidising subscriptions to journals and offers of textbooks also are aspects of education, although none would be to the direct benefit of our members alone.

Given the situation vis-à-vis funds, outlined in section 3, I submit that we have a long way to go before we can provide other than small grants. Currently we use these to support research projects but if members wish the Board to consider other uses for money surplus to reserves we will be pleased to consider their thoughts.

Richard Harvey,
President, ESVD.