

HEARING AND STRUCTURE PRESERVATION WORKSHOP, 10–13 OCTOBER 2013, HEIDELBERG, GERMANY

Artur Lorens

World Hearing Center, Institute of Physiology and Pathology of Hearing, Warsaw/Kajetany, Poland

Corresponding author: Artur Lorens, World Hearing Center, Institute of Physiology and Pathology of Hearing, Warsaw/Kajetany, Poland, e-mail: a.lorens@ifps.org.pl

Some 130 participants converged for the newly renamed “Hearing and Structure Preservation Workshop” in Heidelberg, Germany, on 10–13 October 2013. This was the 12th consecutive event in the hearing preservation workshop series, hosted this year by the University of Heidelberg’s Ear Nose Throat Clinic.

This year the event was renamed from the “Hearing Preservation Workshop” to the “Hearing and Structure Preservation Workshop” in recognition of the growing importance of preserving structure, necessary in all CI candidates.

Over 30 distinguished speakers were present at the Marriott Hotel in Heidelberg for the annual event. The venue for this year’s meeting overlooks the city’s Medical University campus on the river Neckar. The medical faculty of Heidelberg, the oldest in Germany, is distinguished by over 600 years of education and research in medicine. Together with the historic old town, castle, and vineyards on both sides of the Rhine valley, Heidelberg served as the ideal backdrop for this year’s event.

In the opening session the history of hearing preservation was brought to life by its pioneers, Professors Christoph von Ilberg, Henryk Skarzynski, and Wolf-Dieter Baumgartner. Attendees were reminded of the foundation of the Hearing Preservation Workshop meeting in 2002, which has led to a flourishing of outstanding clinical and basic research groups worldwide. The involvement of these specialists has led to remarkable levels of hearing preservation and the continued success of the Hearing and Structure Preservation Workshops.

The interesting content and diversity of this year’s scientific program were due to the contributions of eminent hearing specialists from across the field. Audiologists, clinicians, histologists, physiologists, and electronic engineers from near and far joined together to participate in a program of lectures and round table discussions. They also enjoyed the opportunity to socialise and exchange ideas with their peers.

Distinguished speakers presented material on the basic scientific and clinical aspects of hearing preservation, including its technical innovation, support, and clinical outcomes, and on protective and regenerative medicine.

Cochlear implant pioneer, Blake Wilson (who was recently awarded the Lasker-DeBaakey Clinical Medical Research Award, along with Med-El CEO Ingeborg Hochmair and Graeme Clark, University of Melbourne), presented on the “Future possibilities of electric acoustic stimulation” (EAS). His earlier work on processing strategies has provided the basis for modern day sound-processing strategies. In his presentation Prof. Wilson highlighted possibilities for improved hearing performance and concentrated on the broader application of EAS in Partial Deafness Treatment. Data from the combined results of the Institute of Physiology and Pathology of Hearing in Kajetany, Poland, and the Mayo Clinic, Rochester, USA were presented.

The scientific program of the workshop also included topics such as electrode studies, outcome prediction and improvement, pharmacological approaches in otoprotection, tinnitus, peripheral assessment, and approaches to tissue engineering.

The application of a new hearing preservation classification system, developed under the leadership of Prof. Skarzynski and the Herring Group, was also presented. The Herring Group have developed a comprehensive hearing preservation classification system suitable for use in all cochlear implant users with measurable pre-operative residual hearing. The data presented showed that the new classification system works effectively, and clearly and accurately describes hearing preservation results.

The Hearing and Structure Preservation Workshop provides a foundation for the discussion of such new developments and is an excellent forum for the development of otorhinolaryngology, audiology, and their associated technologies, particularly through its round table discussions. A goal for future meetings is to continue to provide and develop these opportunities for all involved.

The continued success of the Hearing and Structure Preservation Workshops is owed to its outstanding scientific program, the commitment of its organisers, and the continued participation of top-level hearing specialists from around the globe.