

11TH INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS OF THE EUROPEAN SOCIETY OF PEDIATRIC OTORHINOLARYNGOLOGY, 20–21.5.2012, AMSTERDAM, THE NETHERLANDS

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The 11th International Congress of the European Society of Pediatric Otorhinolaryngology (ESPO) took place between 20 and 23 May 2012 in Amsterdam. The Society originated in 1994 when it was founded as a successor to the European Working Group in Pediatric Otorhinolaryngology. ESPO's main objectives are facilitating the dissemination of knowledge on otorhinolaryngologic disorders in children, enhancing scientific communication, promoting scientific and training programs, and creating new standards. The Congress was organised by Prof. Anne Schilder as a continuation of previous meetings which took place in Oxford, Athens, Paris, Budapest, and Pamplona. This year's meeting assembled about 800 participants from 63 countries ranging across Europe, North and South America, and Asia.

The scientific program included 5 plenary sessions, 11 roundtable sessions, 21 free paper sessions, and 11 workshops. The workshops covered a range of issues from practical aspects of pediatric otolaryngology to how to prepare a systematic review of scientific publications. Throughout the meeting there were electronic poster sessions that included 45-minute presentations on the results of independent research, analysis of materials, and descriptions of rare and interesting cases. The electronic form allowed all conference participants to receive a copy of the materials.

In the first plenary session, a lecture was delivered by Prof. Martin Burton. He stressed how important it was for patients to be fully informed about treatment options based on scientific facts, not the individual doctor's opinion. In this context, he pointed out that the patient must be involved in making decisions about treatment. Implants are currently the most intensively developing branch of pediatric otolaryngology, and were one of the dominant themes of the Congress. A major topic was simultaneous bilateral implantation in young patients with profound bilateral sensorineural hearing loss. Prof. Andrej Krall emphasised the importance of minimising the time between sequential implants due to the possibility of irreversible loss of activation of the two hemispheres. Attention was also focused

on unilateral deafness in children and ways to treat it. The Med-El company unveiled a new solution in the field of bone conduction hearing – the Bonebridge. It is based on the concept of using a bone conduction implant such as BAHA, but instead of using the traditional transcutaneous implant screw it uses an external removable magnet speech processor. This strategy avoids common local skin reactions around the implant screw. The implant can be used in cases of congenital defects of middle and external ear, unilateral deafness of varying etiology, and radical ear surgery with persistent purulent persistent leaks.

An important discussion was on imbalances in children. It has been reported that 50–60% of children with sensorineural hearing loss have problems of this nature. Issues of diagnosis were raised, particularly in the youngest children, as well as the need to establish multidisciplinary teams to deal with vestibular disorders. It was recommended that rehabilitation be introduced to improve proper functioning of the sense organs and to avoid motor and other developmental problems (including coordination) related to the balance, especially in children who have undergone implant surgery.

During the meeting, otosurgery operations were broadcast live from the Department of Otolaryngology of the University of Utrecht and the Medizinische Hochschule in Hanover as part of the LION Foundation Programme. Surgeries included Bonebridge implantation and cochlear implantation from the suprameatal approach and the round window approach.

Other discussion sessions included hearing screening in different age groups, exudative otitis immunology, and genetics of hearing loss. Sessions were also devoted to oncology in pediatric otolaryngology, birth defects in children, immunology, and vaccination.

The next meeting in this series will take place in Dublin in 2014.