

2008 Madrid, Spain

12th EFNS Congress, Madrid, Spain, 23 - 26 August 2008

Welcome Address of the President

As President of the EFNS I would like first of all to express our deep sympathy and participation in the sorrow of our host country. The tragic events at the Madrid Airport have to reinforce the solidarity between our European countries.

However, life goes on and as Neurologists we must fight further against the impact of devastating disorders of the nervous system.

It is a great pleasure to welcome you in Madrid for the 12th Congress of the European Federation of Neurological Societies. We expect the most important attendance in the history of the EFNS, near 5000 participants, although this congress takes place during a period in which some people are still on vacation.

However, I hope that the interesting scientific programme and the social events will compensate the shortening of your vacation period.

Madrid, the capital of Spain, offers a variety of cultural and artistic events as result of the blend of cultures that have settled there through the centuries. Take advantage to discover the 'Goyas' and the 'Flamenco' Madrid as well as the typical Spanish food.

This congress would not be possible if we did not have a perfect organization. First of all I wish to thank Professor Antonio Gil-Nagel Rein and the local organizing committee for their kind hospitality and the excellent collaboration making this congress a great event.

Mrs. Lisa Müller and the whole EFNS staff of the offices in Vienna, Florence and Prague have again done a great job in order that everything, up to details, is running smoothly. The organization of the congress by Mrs. Dreman and Kenes International is, as always, spotless.

As you know the EFNS organizes regional teaching courses in East-European countries. For the first time this year we have been able to expand our efforts to promote Neurology in Africa and have the first EFNS teaching course in Dakar, organized in collaboration with IBRO and the WFN.

As usual, the President of the EFNS, in his opening speech, has to develop a topic of general interest. You will already be aware from our previous congresses that I like to present a controversial topic. So, this time it will be the same, although I expect less disapproval on this occasion. The title of my talk is Brain and Wine.

Since ancient times drinking wine is part of the cultural and the social lifestyle in the Western world. It has also become an art to recognize the taste of the different wine grapes and to distinguish the good from the bad wines. In the medical world, neurologists seem to be particularly privileged in handling and tasting wine. Perhaps this can be explained by the fact that wine tasting is a complex cognitive exercise that needs particular neurological skills.

Functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging (fMRI) studies have shown that tasting wine is correlated to increased brain activity not only in the primary gustative areas but also the front-orbital cortex and the left insular region.

A recent fMRI study has shown differences in brain activation between naive wine drinkers and sommeliers. The former activates on tasting only the primary gustative cortex, including amygdala, implicated in the emotional processing. In sommeliers, on

the other hand, also the left insula, the orbito-frontal cortex and the dorsolateral prefrontal cortex, bilaterally, are activated. This implies the use of working memory and selection of behavioural strategies.

An fMRI study, performed in California, showed that wine price also influences the taste perception. More activation of the orbito-frontal cortex is observed when subjects drank wine, they said was more pleasurable and expensive. The same Cabernet Sauvignon wine, told at a price of 90\$, increased the brain activity compared to when told to cost only 10\$. You will agree that if the same study had used neurologists as test persons the results would be quite different. Also, the quality of the bottle labels can influence wine taste perception.

In California, a new experimental MRI scanner has been developed that is capable to check whether a wine bottle is spoiled without opening it. Each wine has its own vinegar 'footprint' in the pattern of spectroscopic frequencies that it emits. Changes in these frequencies can easily be detected.

One of the main medical questions is whether drinking wine is protective for the brain. It is already proven for many years that low intake of wine protects against cardio- and cerebrovascular diseases. High intake, on the other hand, is harmful. Wine also protects against colorectal cancer and has been shown in meta-analysis studies to have an overall beneficial effect on all causes of mortality.

One of the controversial issues is whether wine protects against Alzheimer's disease. According to a German study wine is harmful. This is based on an MRI study showing more pronounced hippocampus atrophy in the brain of wine drinkers compared to non-consumers and, surprisingly, also beer drinkers. On the other hand, an American study, comparing to persons with alcohol abstention, showed that the consumption of 1 to 6 glasses of wine weekly is associated with a lower risk of incident dementia. Finally, according to a Swedish study wine saves only the brain of women from dementia. The hypothesis is that women have a more fixed drinking pattern than men. Swedish young women today prefer wine and liquor.

The neuroprotective effect of wine is attributed to its polyphenol compounds. Antioxidant phenol substances inhibit low-density lipoprotein and affect homeostasis and carcinogenesis. Red wine contains the most polyphenols since skin and grape seeds are included in the winemaking process. The polyphenol content changes according to the degree of maturation of the red wine. Champagne has recently been shown to also contain a high quantity of polyphenols while the amount in white wine is low and it is absent in port and beer. However, wine grapes are not the only source of polyphenols. They are also present in fruit, like apples, pears, strawberries, blackberries, cantaloupe, cherries, raspberries and plums and in vegetables such as broccoli, cabbage, celery, onion and parsley. Chocolate, green tea, olive oil and bee pollen also contain high amounts of polyphenols.

So, at the end of this presentation I can safely raise this glass of red wine to your 'Salud, Dinero, Y Amor'.

Jacques de Reuck

Greetings from Madrid

Dear colleagues,

The 12th EFNS Congress in Madrid was attended by more than 5,000 delegates, not only from Europe, but from every other continent as well. The Spanish Neurological Society as host of the congress wants to thank you and your Neurological Societies for making this congress a success. The Opening Ceremony took place in the large Auditorium of the Madrid Congress Centre. The audience was addressed by EFNS President Prof Jacques De Reuck who illustrated us on the benefits of moderate drinking of wine, and wished 'Salud, dinero y amor' to all the delegates. I followed with some peculiar remarks about Madrid and 'Madrilenos' and how their character has shaped the personality of this city. We had the pleasure of listening Dr. Pedro Garcia-Ruiz, Acting Chairman of Neurology, Fundación Jiménez Díaz. His lecture showed us how neurological disorders can be traced through ancient and modern art, as well as the extensive knowledge in movement disorders and art that he has accumulated over the years. Eberhard Deisenhammer presented us the archives of the EFNS, one of the most exciting new projects of the EFNS. The opening ceremony was perfectly shaped up thanks to the exciting dancing and singing of Aroma, one of the most acclaimed Modern Flamenco companies.

This congress was a milestone for Spanish Neurology and showed the vibrant energy that EFNS is transmitting to world neurology. We also remembered the success of the EFNS congress in Seville in 1998, thanks to the work and efforts of Dr. José Chacón, and how this success stimulated Spanish participation in the following EFNS events.

I had the benefit and the honour to collaborate during the years of preparation with the scientific programme committee and its chairman Gian Luigi Lenzi. All the organization ran perfectly on time, thanks to the efficiency of Elisabeth Müller, Anja Sander and Julia Mayer from the EFNS Head Office in Vienna. The merit goes also to Evelyn Sipido, Magda Dohnalova and our congress secretariat Kenes, with Daniella Dreman diligently heading the red coated team of hostesses and multimedia technicians.

The congress comprised 49 scientific sessions, 1514 poster presentations, 19 teaching courses attended by 2388 amongst you and 17 satellite symposia. We also had the opportunity to join efforts with the European Federation of Autonomic Societies, in addition to our usual guests: the Movement Disorders Society and the European Epilepsy Academy (EUREPA).

The closing ceremony, as usual, was a dynamic meeting in a sparsely occupied auditorium, where a rain of awards and other prizes were shared among delegates not only from Europe, but also from Asia and America. Dr. Antonio Federico presented the 13th EFNS Congress that will take place in Florence, September 12- 15, 2009, and were I hope to see you again.

I thank all the delegates for having made the Congress in Madrid such a successful event and encourage them to participate actively in Florence next year, in order to continue shaping the strength and dynamism of the EFNS.

Antonio Gil-Nagel
On behalf of the Spanish Neurological Society