THE OUTGOING SECRETARY'S VOICE

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This is my last contribution to *Hypertension News* as the Society's Secretary. I enjoyed my job very much but there is no reason for me to be sad since, as a famous German football (soccer) player once formulated "I never look back, I always look ahead"

I have served as a member of the Council and Chair of the ISH Beijing Committee from 2016-18 and in the following two years as the Society's Secretary. Before this, I was involved in the organization of the biennial ISH Congresses in Heidelberg in 1986, and in Berlin in 2008, meetings, that many of you remember.

After some years of involvement in other issues, I came back to ISH in 2016 and found the Society in good shape: Under the presidency of Neil Poulter, the Society's global mission was enforced especially with the establishment of the May Measurement Month (MMM) project. With an enormous energy and the help of many members of the Society, Neil created in a surprisingly short time, a network of collaboration comprising more than 100 countries across the globe. In the three years from 2017-19, MMM collected blood pressure samples from 4.2 Million individuals leading to first diagnosis of hypertension in almost 1 Million of them. MMM not only contributed markedly to the increased awareness of hypertension especially in the Low- and Middle-Income countries but also generated a substantial number of academic papers in renowned journals. The latest of them, published in a supplement of the *European Heart Journal*, deals with the individual MMM results in 40 countries again demonstrating the global reach of the initiative.

No doubt, MMM has been a flagship of ISH despite the fact that, for security reasons, the corona pandemic has rendered global blood pressure measurement actions currently impossible. We sincerely hope to resume MMM activities in the years to come. While during the first years the Society has substantially contributed financially to realize the project, external funding has now taken over so that the financial burden for ISH has been eased. This raises the question as to the future administration of MMM. On one hand, this initiative has certainly been an asset for the Society, on the other hand, one could also think of an administration by an independent MMM Managing Board associated with but not necessarily administrated by the Society. In any case, members of the ISH council involved in the acquisition of external funding should be part of the MMM Management Board.

One of my first tasks as fresh Council member was the overhauling of the ISH constitution. There were some incongruencies that had accumulated over the years and needed clarification. In particular, the role of the president and the different boards as well as the respective election procedures had to be actualized. The amended, approved constitution gives the president some special rights, for instance to appoint members of the Executive Committee (EC) which is running the daily business, but this implies that he or she uses the granted power prudently without trying to override decisions of the EC or Council. The two past presidents during my time as Council member and Secretary, Neil Poulter and Alta

Schutte, have run their office with great respect concerning these democratic usances.

A continuous pleasure has been my service on the Editorial Board of *Hypertension News*. From the beginning with some hundred readers, this online magazine has now gained a substantial readership with up to ten thousand downloads for each issue and can undoubtedly be called another flagship of the Society. Most of the credit goes to the tireless Editor, Lars H. Lindholm, with his enormous expertise and experience in hypertension affairs, but more recently also to the deputy editor, Dylan Burger, who is virtuoso playing on the keyboard of the social media. I am quite glad that I will be allowed to stay on the Editorial Board for the upcoming years.

A major task during my time in office was the creation of new ISH Hypertension Guidelines. This matter was dealt with extensively in the last issue of *Hypertension News* and I do not wish to reiterate what has already been written.

Needless to say, that this was a major challenge as Chair of the Guidelines Committee facing a lot of scepticism in the beginning, but finally a useful document appeared in May 2020, published concomitantly in *Hypertension* and *Journal of Hypertension* with the kind support of their respective editors, Anna Dominiczak and Guiseppe Mancia.

With the division between “optimal” (for the more affluent regions) and “essential” (for the Low- and Middle Income regions of the world) these “2020 ISH Global Hypertension Practice Guidelines” have a USP, a unique selling point, among the numerous national and regional Hypertension Guidelines currently available.

So far to the past, but what do I expect looking ahead

First, ISH is the only scientific society devoted to combat hypertension disease in a global fashion. This statement implies a lot: Different from national and regional hypertension Societies, the global aspect of the battle against hypertension is primordial. This is e.g. represented in the MMM initiative to increase the awareness of hypertension worldwide, in the division between

optimal and essential recommendations in the recent ISH Hypertension Guidelines, also in the various activities of the Regional Advisory Groups (RAGs) and in collaborations with affiliated national hypertension Societies and the World Hypertension League. These activities must be maintained and wherever possible intensified.

It's global reach implies further that ISH assists in recruiting and fostering a new generation of hypertension scientists from all countries, not only from the established western and eastern world.

The *Young Investigator* initiative, originally created by one of the former ISH presidents, Stephen Harrap, has proven to be quite successful in this respect and needs to be expanded and exploited. The global mission of our Society also implies that its Council members need to be selected from all continents in a representative fashion. During the last decades, the presidents of ISH tended to come exclusively from countries belonging to the British Commonwealth, UK, Canada, Australia, South Africa. This led to the suspicion among some people that ISH is predominantly a British Commonwealth institution, a development which cannot be reconciled with the global claims of our Society.

Moreover, future members of the various ISH Boards and Committees should be carefully selected: being young, highly motivated and from diverse backgrounds are important factors but there should always be a balance between the non-experienced young and the established, experienced, old. Considered should also be the fact that young members, who still need to invest much of their time into hospital care obligations, individual professional carriers and personal affairs like building up a family, can only invest a limited amount of time and energy in Society matters. In addition, a scientific Society with global claims, whose officers predominantly belong to the group of assistant professors, will have difficulties to be respected by the outside world.

As a scientific Society, ISH has to support research into hypertension as well as its concomitant diseases and sequelae as much as possible. The biennial scientific ISH congress in different parts of the world constitutes a valid step into this direction but more can be done locally and regionally

to initiate and activate research activities, for instance with the help of the internet and its numerous possibilities. During the last "corona months" many of us have gained some expertise with virtual meetings. Admittedly, these can be effective, and they are undoubtedly cost saving. On the other hand, in my experience virtual meetings lack important features of conventional face-to-face meetings such as a certain team or group spirit which quite often develops during a physical meeting not seldom associated with inspiration and new energy, they further lack the free exchange of thoughts and scientific and personal matters during dinner or breakfast, all those exchanges which can be considered the lubrication of transmission in a Society. Thus, in my view, despite several advantages, virtual meetings can never replace the real ones, and my sincere hope is that we can reach an effective balance between physical and virtual conferences once the horrid pandemic is over.

Hypertension research has always been endangered from different sides because of its interdisciplinary diversity with no single organ pathology involved. However, this "shortcoming" can also be considered an enormous advantage

if the chances are used in cooperation with other disciplines. ISH should actively promote such activities as far as resources allow.

Speaking about resources, While hypertension Societies two decades ago could heavily rely on the financial support of "big pharma", many of them being corporate members, this situation has changed dramatically for well-known reasons during the last fifteen years or so. One of the major future tasks of our Society will therefore consist in the recovery of external support from industry, pharmaceutical or other, and from other sources. We will have to increase the number of corporate members by offering win-win situations to them, a challenging but not impossible mission.

Let me close with an old Latin proverb as a congratulation message to the new president and his executives: *quidquid agis prudenter agas et respice finem*, will say: Whatever you do, be prudent in doing so, and consider the outcome.

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