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INTERNATIONAL DANUBE NEUROLOGY SYMPOSIUM FOR
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1. Message from Professor Wolfgang Grisold, WFN President

(This document is also available in <https://wfneurology.org/>)

Dear Visitors of the WFN website!

On behalf of the WFN I welcome you and invite you to the WFN website. The WFN website provides not only information on the WFN, but also adds news and is frequently updated. Within the website you have access to our WFN Newsletter, World Neurology, which is free and you are invited to download it and also able to subscribe. In addition we post regularly on social media, and we have added a WFN Service Page in our Journal of the Neurological Sciences (JNS) to update on the activities of the WFN and also include invited reviews and reports (see latest issue). In addition to the JNS, we also have the eNeurologicalSci (eNS) as our other official journal.

The yearly meeting of delegates—the Council of Delegates (COD)—will be held on the 25th of Sept. 2024 virtually. The WFN now has 124 members, and each member society has a delegate representing the member society. The present distribution of male/female delegates is 23% female and 76% male, which resembles the worldwide distribution of male to female parliamentarians (www.unwomen.org/.../leadership-and-political-participation/facts-and-figures, www.ipu.org/.../new-ipu-report-more-women-in-parliament-and-more-countries-with-gender-parity).

The future goal will be to aim at a 50:50 distribution.

The COD meeting will contain several reports. The audited reports which be distributed in advance and will be discussed and approved. Several committees will be asked to report on their activities in the past year. We will have one electronic election for an elected trustee. This newly elected trustee replaces Prof. Alla Guekht, who is now at the end of her second term. For this position, 6 candidates considered as appropriate have been selected by the nomination committee. Please see their statements in World Neurology and on the website.

The next site of the **World Congress of Neurology (WCN 2025)** will be Seoul, South Korea, and for 2027 Cape Town has been elected. Following Cape town in 2027, the next site in 2029 will be in Europe. The first call will go out.

This year, the WFN for the first time introduces a virtual update meeting, WNU, which will cover the recent developments in the most frequent neurological diseases, and also include teaching courses. The meeting will be virtual and we hope to reach all parts of the world, in particular low-middle and low income countries. The lectures will also be presented as short communications in the eNS, which is an Open Access journal, to promote and prolong the impact. Other virtual

education days will be the joint WFN-AFAN-IHS headache day (see EHHPA 2023), and we are planning the joint Asian WFN-AOAN educational days on movement disorders for 2025.

For 2025 the next WCN is planned for Seoul in South Korea, and presently the preparations are ongoing. Please note that we have reduced the duration of the congress by one day, and it will end on Wednesday. As in all previous WCNs, we strive to have an attractive scientific program with local flavour, and will also provide a series of teaching courses. We will also keep our neuropolitical activities, such as the regional meetings and we hope to be able to have guests also from the WHO. We will continue to promote interactive sessions such as debates and "coffee talks". The tradition of paper poster presentation will be maintained and we will be introducing more interactive aspects to enhance the program and faculty interactions. As before, we will apply for CME accreditation. Last but not least we will also provide an interesting social program. Please follow our congress proceedings on the website and social media.

As in previous years, congress bursaries for young neurologists will be available. Awards will include the joint AAN/WFN Munsat Award on education, the Angela Vincent award, and the prestigious Elsevier awards.

Education and global neurology are the main activities of the WFN. For education, we are glad to report that for all **WFN training centers** we received many applications. (for Cairo: 9, for Mexico: 7, and for Rabat 4-year training: 18). The selection was very competitive, and we congratulate Aba Cisse from Mali, Cynthia Marleny Aliñado Ramos from Guatemala, and Prince Kazadi from Democratic Republic of Congo to their selection. I also want to thank the selection committees and Jade Levi for their responsible and thorough work.

We are proud to keep up the WFN Training Centers (TCs) since 2013 and have initiated the official site visits this year in Cairo, which will be followed by Dakar in July, and Rabat and Cape town in Autumn. The TCs have produced a number of successful participants which will be presented in the Alumni list. The intent is to support the training of neurologists in Africa and Meso- and Latin America, either as full training or a fellowship. For Cairo we acknowledge the support of the Association of British Neurologists (ABN), and for Rabat a constant additional trainee supported from the ICNMD. All other funds come from the WFN and we are very glad to be able to support this program.

The **department visits program** continues and we have several successful participants. Increasingly the travel restrictions, in particular visa applications, put an additional strain on the organization of these short term visits, for both the applicants as well as the inviting societies. We hope that these regulations, which are often still a post covid residual, will change for the better again.

Training, knowledge, and science is not enough, and neurological societies have the implicit duty to train younger colleagues also about advocacy and leadership. The WFN has continued the WCN Advocacy teaching courses in the biennial WCNs over years, which emphasized these important aspects on a smaller scale. In 2023 the AAN and the WFN started to co-develop a joint **Global Advocacy and Leadership course** (GALP), which will be initiated at the AAN meeting in San Diego in 2025 with an onsite intensive training course, followed by 5 virtual meetings discussing topics and meeting mentors, and ending in another in person meeting with graduation of the participants at the WCN in Seoul. The meeting is directed at low-middle and low income countries and 20 persons will be selected after a careful process to participate in this GALP course. All travel costs and the local costs will be included. Please look out for the GALP announcement from both the AAN and WFN.

The WFN has introduced an **e-learning hub**, serving not only the communication with other providers, but also keeping an archive of congresses, e-learning days, virtual meetings, and topics. This e learning hub has now been re-engineered and has received a new platform which will allow better access and easy use. Please use our e-learning hub as a source of information and education.

This year's **World Brain Day** (WBD) will be on *Brain Health and Prevention*. Both topics have a history: Brain health is a continuing topic, which has also been taken up worldwide by other societies and is in line with the WHO's efforts. The 5 pillars of the IGAP are: Advocacy, Therapy, Prevention, Innovation/Research, and Public health. From these 5 pillars we chose prevention as

this year's topic, as prevention is a powerful and often underestimated tool we need to use to preserve brain health, and also increase the number of persons which are not affected by neurological diseases.

All scientific societies and subspecialties are encouraged to design and work on prevention, and the developments in stroke have shown what powerful instruments can be developed. Please follow us on our WBD, and even more importantly use our toolbox to promote the WBD in your region. Please also download the WFN - WHO IGAP Toolkit information leaflet.

We hope that despite all worldwide violence and often incomprehensible developments, the spirit of neurology will unite us in improving the care for patients with neurological disorders, therapies and treatment, as well as rehabilitation. We also need to include patients ("persons with lived experience"), carers and the public more into our considerations.

"The World does not Stop" (*), and we have to increase our efforts in education and advocacy worldwide and our common goal is to have access and equity for neurology worldwide.

(*) Key quote at the JNS Gala Dinner in Tokyo, May 2024, by Wolfgang Grisold.

2. In Loving Memory of Professor Zbigniew Stelmasiak, MD, PhD (by the Managing Board of the Danube Symposium)



Born: 18 April 1941 – Died: 6 May 2024

Professor Zbigniew Stelmasiak was a towering figure in Polish neurology, gaining international acclaim for his groundbreaking contributions to the field of Multiple Sclerosis (MS) therapy. He was among the first globally to explore the use of cladribine in MS treatment, with the results of his pioneering research, conducted in collaboration with the Polish Academy of Sciences, published in *The Lancet*. He served as President of the Polish Neurological Society's Board for two terms, President of its Lublin Branch, and was the Regional Consultant in Neurology.

For many years, Professor Stelmasiak led the Neurology Department at University Training Hospital No. 4, as well as the Department of Neurology at the Medical University of Lublin. He was a member of the University Senate and an esteemed academic lecturer, instructing both Polish and international students. He was also founding member and first President of the Society of Alumni and Friends of the Medical University of Lublin.

In his capacity as long-term Deputy Secretary General of the International Danube Neurological Society, Professor Stelmasiak initiated and organized international neurological symposia in Kazimierz Dolny, Poland. He was also a member and delegate of the Polish Neurological Society to the World Federation of Neurology and the European Federation of Neurological Societies (EFNS). He co-founded and served as the inaugural chairman of the Neurosonology Section of the Polish Neurosonology Society, where he later became an honorary member. He was deeply committed to improving the lives of MS patients, working tirelessly to increase access to reimbursed services and supporting the Polish Multiple Sclerosis Society through his role on the Advisory Medical Committee of the PTSR.

Renowned for his dedication to both patients and colleagues, Professor Stelmasiak often placed the good of others above his own. He is said to have established what has come to be known as the Lublin School of Neurology. He mentored and educated five professors of neurology and cultivated an entire generation of neurologists. Over the course of his career, he authored or co-authored several hundred scientific publications and presented at numerous national and international neurological congresses. He also served on the editorial boards of many scientific journals.

In recognition of his exceptional contributions to the field and to society, Professor Stelmasiak was awarded numerous honors, including the Gold Cross of Merit, the Medal of the National Education Commission, the Honorary Badge "For Merit for Health Care," the Badge "For Exemplary Work in Health Service," the Beautiful Brain Award, among many others. Early in his career, he received a scholarship from the British Council, which led to his appointment as a Visiting Professor at the Department of Neurochemistry at the world-renowned London National Hospital for Neurology and Neurosurgery at Queen Square. He also spent seven years in Libya, where he headed the neurology department in Tripoli.

In the final chapter of his life, Professor Stelmasiak took a considerable step by founding a company to ensure the continuation of his family's tradition in medicine and the advancement of science. This decision reflected his deep commitment to the principles that had shaped his life's endeavors.

(We thank Ewa Stelmasiak for her help in the compiling of the commemoration.)

3. Letter to the history of our Symposia by Professor Michael Brainin by kind invitation of Professor László Vécsei

I was kindly asked by Professor Laszlo Vecsei, our president and torchbearer of the Danube symposium for many years, to add in this newsletter my little contribution I had the opportunity to give to the series of this Symposium. I was appointed as General Secretary in 1997 and was asked by the Board to organize the annual symposium in my home town and at my university for 1998. Quite notably, the Danube University Krems was going to host the Danube Symposium! I was especially thrilled because in 1977 I had given my first scientific presentation at this symposium at the 'Hofburg' in Vienna. We had already been involved in previous meetings and found that that this symposium needed some vital input. Together with my later wife, the neuroresearcher Alexandra Dachenhausen, we created a new logo, the blue river meandering between red triangles denoting the river Danube and adjoining cities. We changed the name to 'International Danube Symposium' because we were convinced that international contributions were vital for such a meeting. Also some satellite activities for younger colleagues were included. We must add that we had help and advice from Dr. Uschi Tschabitscher at that time, without her the symposium would have never flourished in the way we had envisaged. We are proud to say that this new format has withstood the test of time and has been kept up to today where this meeting continues to attract hundreds of neurologists and neuroscientists every year.

From August 27-29 1998 we held the 30th International Danube Symposium at the Danube University Krems, Austria. It was opened by the Federal Minister of Science Dr. Kaspar Einem. Also attending were Professor James Toole from Winston-Salem, USA, who was President of the World Stroke Organisation and later became the President of the World Federation of Neurology. Among other international scientists and leading stroke trialists were Don Easton from USA and Armand Lowenthal from Belgium. Of course, the leaders from our symposium were all there also to attend the annual Board meeting and leading Austrian neurologists, among them Franz Aichner and Eberhard Deisenhammer. Professor Gerstenbrand gave a welcome speech and gave special thanks to other leading neurologists from neighboring countries.

In 1999 we helped organize the 31st Symposium in Dubrovnik, Croatia. To increase attendance from Austria we leased a 50-seat passenger plane and flew directly from Vienna to Dubrovnik and back. This was very comfortable and a reward for our hard work the previous year.

This was a very productive period in my career, and I enjoyed the friendly and hospitable atmosphere in many later meetings.



Michael Brainin
Vienna, September 2024
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4. Short report about the activity of the Symposium for Multiple Sclerosis (SMS) under the Danube Symposium for Neurological Sciences (by Professor László Vécsei)

We inform you about the activity of the Symposium for Multiple Sclerosis (SMS) under the Danube Symposium for Neurological Sciences. The first step was to organize survey at national levels related to MS Registry in different countries (altogether around 107 million people). The Hungarian data has been published in PLoS One (see the link below):

<https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0264328>

The publication about the international data is available in Multiple Sclerosis and Related Disorders, 2023 Jan;69:104406. doi: 10.1016/j.msard.2022.104406.

(The link of the abstract: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/36413917/>).

Now we are working hard on the next steps: the (1) neuroimaging programme and (2) CSF analysis and special molecular biomarkers surveys.

Symposium for Multiple Sclerosis

Austrian Symposium for Multiple Sclerosis

Professor Thomas Berger: MS Registry, Molecular Biomarkers thomas.berger@meduniwien.ac.at

Dr Gabriel Bsteh: Registry gabriel.bsteh@meduniwien.ac.at

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Croatian Symposium for Multiple Sclerosis

Professor Vanja Basic Kes: MS Registry kesvanja@gmail.com

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Dr Lucija Zadro Matovina: MRI imaging lucija.zadro@gmail.com

Czech Symposium for Multiple Sclerosis

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Hungarian Symposium for Multiple Sclerosis

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Polish Symposium for Multiple Sclerosis

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Serbian Symposium for Multiple Sclerosis

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5. Unveiling Research Excellence: The Power of Bibliometrics in Showcasing Your Work (by Masaru Tanaka, MD, PhD and Professor László Vécsei)

In the rapidly evolving landscape of academia and scientific research, bibliometrics has emerged as a crucial tool for assessing the impact and dissemination of scholarly work [1]. Bibliometrics involves the quantitative analysis of academic literature, allowing for the evaluation of research outputs through various indicators. These metrics are essential not only for scientists but also for clinicians, as they provide measurable parameters that reflect the influence and reach of their research. Understanding bibliometrics is vital for comprehensively evaluating research contributions, fostering transparency, and guiding decision-making in research funding, policy-making, and academic advancement.

The Role of Quantitative and Qualitative Evaluations

While qualitative evaluation offers nuanced insights into the significance and originality of research, quantitative indicators provided by bibliometrics offer a more objective and standardized measure of research outcomes [2]. Metrics such as citation counts, h-index, and journal impact factors are widely used to assess the reach and influence of scientific work. These metrics, although not without limitations, provide a snapshot of the visibility and recognition a piece of research has garnered within the academic community. For clinicians, particularly those involved in medical research, these quantitative evaluations are crucial in demonstrating the clinical relevance and impact of their studies on patient care and public health policies [3].

Key Bibliometric Platforms

Several key bibliometric platforms provide valuable data and services, each with distinct characteristics. Web of Science and Scopus are two comprehensive citation databases, renowned for their extensive coverage of peer-reviewed journals and robust tools for tracking citation counts and calculating metrics like the h-index [4]. Google Scholar, known for its broader inclusion of various scholarly materials such as conference papers and theses, offers an accessible way to track the impact of diverse publications. ORCID provides unique identifiers for researchers, ensuring proper attribution and facilitating the integration of research activities across platforms [5]. Scientometrics.com focuses on detailed analyses, including the number of independent citations, publications in Q1 journals as a first or last author, and top 1 percentile papers as a first or last author, providing a detailed and nuanced evaluation of academic impact [6]. Lastly, ResearchGate serves as a social networking site for researchers, enabling direct interaction and collaboration while also providing metrics on publications and citations [7].

Encouraging Active Engagement in Research

It is imperative for clinicians to actively engage with these bibliometric platforms to enhance the visibility and impact of their research [8,9]. By regularly updating their profiles and sharing publications, clinicians can increase their work's accessibility to a broader audience, including fellow researchers, policymakers, and the general public. Additionally, active participation in these platforms can lead to more collaborative opportunities, furthering the development of multidisciplinary research and improving healthcare outcomes. Showcasing research in these forums not only validates the contributions of clinicians to scientific knowledge but also underscores the practical applications of their work in improving patient care and advancing medical practice.

In conclusion, understanding and utilizing bibliometrics is essential for clinicians to demonstrate the impact of their research effectively. Engaging with platforms like Web of Science, Scopus, Google Scholar, ResearchGate, and Scientometric.com allows for a broader dissemination of research findings and fosters a collaborative academic environment. By embracing these tools, clinicians can ensure their research reaches its full potential in influencing both academic circles and clinical practice.

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6. Neurology News

6.1. Neurology News from Czech Republic (by Professor Eva Havrdova)

Care for patients with multiple sclerosis (pwMS) and other autoimmune central nervous system diseases in Czechia is centralized in 15 specialized centers. The expert guarantor of care is the Section of Clinical Neuroimmunology and Liquorology (SCNIL)¹ of the Czech Neurological Society and the Czech Medical Association of J.E.Purkyne. Treatment follows national professional standards, updated in 2023. In the same year, an initiative was launched to unify MRI diagnostics and monitoring, enhancing the consistency and quality of patient care². SCNIL and the Czech Register of Patients with Multiple Sclerosis (ReMuS)^{3,4} also improve professional quality of care through a biennial neuroimmunology conference (Jedlickovy dny), last held in May.

An important unifying element is the ReMuS registry, which has been collecting data from all MS centres since 2013. The registry's data on demographics, disability, treatment, and safety are essential for physicians, regulators, and also insurance companies, supporting the reimbursement of new drugs. Data from the ReMuS registry are also important for scientific purposes⁵⁻⁸. By the end of 2023, it monitored 21,537 pwMS, 133 with neuromyelitis optica spectrum disorders (NMOSD) and 67 with myelin oligodendrocyte glycoprotein antibody-associated disease (MOGAD). Based on ReMuS data by the end of 2023, the proportion of pwMS treated with high-efficacy disease-modifying therapies (HE-DMTs) increased to 53.3%, with 78.6% initiating HE-DMTs as their first treatment. Also, DMT reimbursement for NMOSD patients has recently expanded.

Additionally, ReMuS facilitates international collaboration; using iMed software, it is directly linked to the international MSBase⁹ database and is part of the BigMS Data Network¹⁰. In international projects, however, the centres also participate individually. For example, the MS centre at the General University Hospital in Prague is connected to MAGNIMS¹¹ and participates in the European CLAIMS¹² grant.

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10. Big Multiple Sclerosis Data Network – The home of MS Real World Evidence! <https://bigmsdata.org/> (accessed June 24, 2024).
11. MAGNIMS (Magnetic Resonance Imaging in MS). <https://www.magnims.eu/> (accessed June 24, 2024).
12. Home | Claims Funding Europe. <https://www.claimsfundingeurope.eu/> (accessed June 24, 2024).

7. Newsletter recommendations

WFN Newsletter

<https://worldneurologyonline.com/>

European Brain Council Newsletter

<https://www.braincouncil.eu/ebc-newsletters/>

8. Future congresses in chronological order

8.1. CONy 2025:

Date: 20-22 March, 2025

Place: Prague, Czech Republic

8.2. EFIC Congress 2025:

Date: 24-26 April, 2025

Place: Lyon, France

8.3. EAN Congress 2025:

Date: 21-24 June, 2025

Place: Seville, Spain

8.4. WCN 2025:

Date: 12-15 October, 2025

Place: Seoul, South Korea

9. Present and Future Activities of the International Danube Symposium for Neurological Sciences and Continuing Education

- The **International Danube Symposium for Neurological Sciences and Continuing Education** fosters and coordinates fellowship programs for young neurologists from Danube Countries
- Coordination of future **Danube Neurology Symposia**
- The **Danube Neurology Newsletter** is available free of charge (also downloadable) on Internet in electronic version
- Information about future events (**Calendar of events**)
- We also consider as our task to help with the activity of the **WFN** and **EAN** in the Danube-countries.

10. Finances of the International Danube Symposium for Neurological Sciences and Continuing Education

According to previous decision of the Danube Neurology Curatorium Meeting, the financial sources of the International Danube Symposium for Neurological Sciences and Continuing Education from all kinds of symposia, conferences, meetings, teaching/training or other kinds of courses under the roof and auspices of our organization, are as follows:

According to a final report of the meetings, symposia, etc. to be handed in electronically to the Head Office in Szeged, Hungary, the financial surplus of all meetings should be divided 70:30 between the Local Organizers and the permanent International Danube Neurology Symposium Head Office in Szeged, Hungary. Or the amount of min. EUR 2,500 is to be transferred – together with the financial report – to the Head Office according to our invoice.

11. Web-site of the International Danube Symposium for Neurological Sciences and Continuing Education

The home-page of the International Danube Symposium for Neurological Sciences and Continuing Education consists of:

- the contents of all Newsletter (Nr.1-36)
- Managing and Executive Board Members of the International Danube Symposium for Neurological Sciences and Continuing Education
- Past and future Symposia, Conferences, Meetings
- Other further important information.