

Editorial

8th National Congress of the Italian Association of Myology (AIM)

The 8th National Congress of the Italian Association of Myology will be held in Pisa, 5-7 June 2008, organized by the Department of Neuroscience, University of Pisa and the support of the U.I.L.D.M. (Unione Italiana Lotta alla Distrofia Muscolare), section of Pisa. The Congress hosts participants coming from the major groups from all over the Italy in order to share the advances made in the recent years and the most actual issues on both research and clinics of muscle diseases. Myology represents an emerging science in the field of medicine, requiring a number of peculiar competences that often require the transversal intervention of different professional figures in a collaborative multidisciplinary team. All the actions demanded of our body are possible thanks to some of the around 500 muscles committed to do that in connection with the nervous system. The relatively easy possibility to have access to muscle tissue and therefore to study those pathologic alterations responsible for a diseased condition has contributed, in the last years, to add importance pieces to the knowledge of molecular and clinical disease mechanisms that have represented a model for a number of pathologic conditions in other organs and systems.

The multidisciplinary trait of this Congress is underlined by the different sessions running along the 3 day scientific program. Besides contributions on more exquisite nosographic contents, sessions are planned to report on recent advances in several different areas covering all the spectrum of investigative issues in muscle diseases, including clinical assessment of muscle impairment, molecular diagnosis, management of cardiac and respiratory complications, treatment and rehabilitation. Particular attention will be devoted to multicentre studies aimed to increase collaboration from different centers finalized both to create wide data base of affected patients and to implement possibilities to achieve critical mass of data. The latter is essential to get inferences on the natural history of some diseases, make uniform diagnostic algorithms and establish the bases to start with collaborative therapeutic trials. Examples for that are represented by the Telethon sponsored multicenter studies on facio-scapulo-humeral muscular dystrophy, congenital muscular dystrophies and spinal muscular atrophies.

Two focused workshops are planned, the first one on day 5, dealing with what are the more actual clinical, diagnostic and therapeutic aspects of muscle fatigue, one of the more typical symptom of a number of muscle diseases, such as muscular dystrophies, mitochondrial and the other metabolic myopathies. Irrespective from the pathogenic factors of muscle fatigue, an objective and reliable assessment of exercise intolerance in these cases is of paramount importance in understanding the phenotypic characteristics of the myopathic clinical appearance. The second workshop deals with respiratory dysfunction in muscle diseases, merging clinical experience of neurologists and pneumologists in the management of respiratory involvement in neuromuscular diseases. Overseas experts will take part in these workshops.

Three lectures are held by invited speakers. The first, during the ceremony for the 8° Pisa Sleep Award, address a quite peculiar issue, how do waking activities, including the motor ones, influence sleep. The others are focused on recent advances on diagnosis and treatment of congenital myopathies and molecular mechanisms of muscle atrophy in muscle diseases.

Over 200 participants are expected to attend these meeting, including mainly neurologists, but also pediatricians, pneumologists, rheumatologists, cardiologists and other professional figures within the health system, such as physiotherapists, nurses and care givers, with the hope to have three appealing days for this event in Pisa.

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