

SEA AND HEALTH
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The third Congress of the French Society of Maritime Medicine (SFMM) was held on 14-15 October at the European Institute of Marine Studies (Western Brittany University) in Brest, France.

There were one hundred participants of this meeting.

Dr Pedro Nogueroles, President of the Spanish Society of Maritime Medicine (SEMM), Pr Nguyen Truong Son and Pr Phan Van Thuc from Vietnam (VINIMAM), were special guests.

The papers of the congress were presented in four sessions :

First Session NEW ANTICOAGULANTS FROM MARINE MOLECULES

Chaired by Dr Anne Marie FISCHER, Paris

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Although the heparins and vitamin K antagonists are very useful in the control of venous thrombosis, their side effects cause that intensive research is needed on new anticoagulants. Two new drugs with an original mechanism of action were just made available on the market, and they are used for the prevention of venous thrombosis in orthopaedic practice:

- the direct inhibitor of thrombin (Ximelagatran),
- the synthetic pentasaccharide, site of bounding of heparin to the antithrombin which has a unique target, the Xa factor of coagulation (Sodic Fondaparinux).

Encouraging results have also been obtained in experiments on animals with sulphated polysaccharide extracts from brown sea-weeds (Fucoïdanes) or secreted by bacteria living in deep hydrothermal springs; these sulphated polysaccharides also have in vitro the property of potentiating the development of vascular plexi. If these results will be confirmed in vivo, they could favour the revascularisation of ischemic areas.

Second Session

NEWS in SCUBA DIVING

If the bases of medicine and physiology of scuba-diving have been known for over a century, the constant development of recreational diving has broadened the investigation field of physicians and scientists interested in underwater and hyperbaric medicine.

The recycling gases equipment, which was used previously by a very small number of military divers, is now more and more favoured by amateur divers. The use of these devices gives advantages, but also presents specific risks. Their operation principles and the new pathologies that could result following their misuse were presented by the senior surgeon Dr Claude ROBINET of the Naval Medicine Institute of the Military Medical Corps.

The number of sport divers is increasing constantly and they belong to a wider range of age. Thanks to the new examination techniques, the origin of these accidents can be investigated more precisely than it was done before and the collecting of data on them is better organised and centralised.

The epidemiology of diving accidents and their causing factors were presented by the senior surgeons Dr Pierre LOUGE and Dr Michel HUGON, from the Navy Diving School, and the occurrence of pulmonary oedema related to diving was reported by Doctors Charles ARVIEUX and Guy COCHARD from the intensive care unit and hyperbaric medicine department of the University Hospital of Brest.

Third Session

MANAGEMENT OF EMERGENCIES AT SEA

Accidents or cardiac events at sea occur everyday. What is the right management of such cases? Who is to be called, how and what information on a case should be

transmitted? What to do while waiting for the necessary help? How should the victim be evacuated? What training of seafarers before embarking should be given and where it should be practiced? During this session about the handling of emergencies at sea, different and suitable responses to these questions were presented and discussed.

Dr VERGNE presented the potential emergencies onboard, the importance of the initial evaluation of the case, and the organisation of assistance. Then Doctors PARIS and FIMBAULT proposed to focus on legislation and on medical units on merchant ships and yachts.

Dr QUERELLOU concluded this first part by presenting the different techniques of evacuation of patients from ship to shore.

During the second part of this session, there was a discussion on the different methods of rescue on ships, and on the training of seafarers.

Fourth Session **TRAUMA AT SEA**

Trauma in maritime practice is a double-face drama: the casualties suffering pain and the psychological effects of injury commonly called "post-traumatic stress", but also their families are affected by a tragedy that frequently leaves no trace of their member, when a man disappears from ship.

In this session, these two aspects of accidents were discussed, finally focusing on one question: what can be done for these victims of tragedies at sea, and how the management of such cases can be improved ? Among the speakers, there were psychiatrists specialised in the care of post-traumatic stress, but also families and seamen who survived severe accidents at sea. A round table conference was conducted with the participation of the main actors of such events.

The next congress will be organised in 2007, in collaboration between the French and the Spanish Societies of Maritime Medicine.