

The 19th Congress of the Baltic Association of Dermatovenerologists, Riga, Latvia, September 14–16, 2023: celebrating advances in dermatology

Andris Rubins¹, Robert A. Schwartz², Silvestrs Rubins¹

¹Dermatovenerology Department, University of Latvia, Riga, Latvia

²Department of Dermatology, Rutgers New Jersey Medical School, Newark, New Jersey, USA

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On September 14–16, 2023, the 19th Congress of the Baltic Association of Dermatovenerologists (BADV) convened at the University of Latvia, in the Great Hall, in which dermatology professors from around the world as well as medical students and residents participated (fig. 1). The Congress President Andris Rubins welcomed attendees alongside the President of the Latvian Academy of Sciences, the Chairman of the University of Latvia Council, Prof. Ivars Kalviņš and the Rector of the University of Latvia, Prof. Indriķis Muižnieks (fig. 2). The Congress President Andris Rubins, Professor of Dermatovenerology of the University of Latvia, who gathered more than 40 lecturers from 12 different countries (USA, Germany, Taiwan, Italy, Netherlands, Finland, Austria,

Great Britain, Spain, Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia), utilized a hybrid format facilitating participation by 353 individuals, 175 in person and 178 remotely. There were also eleven superb poster presentations.

Plenary lectures began with Chih-Hung Lee's (Taiwan) superb presentation lamenting health hazards of chronic arsenic exposure from the drinking water for approximately 140 million people in at least 70 countries, with arsenical skin cancers representing a cutaneous sign of internal malignancy. Kulli Kingo (Estonia) then concentrated on the psoriasis patient treatment. The opening lecturer, Christopher Bunker (United Kingdom) recalled instructive HIV cases from his dermatology clinic. The University of Latvia Dermatology Chair Silvestrs Rubins and the



Figure 1. Lecturers of the first day after the opening ceremony, led by BADV President Prof. Andris Rubins

Congress President Andris Rubins characterized the incidence of syphilis, gonorrhoea, chlamydia and HIV in Latvia from 2018 to 2022 and found chlamydia to be the commonest, followed by HIV. Stefano Veraldi delineated cutaneous fungal infections by unusual fungi, including a patient labelled with *acne keloidalis nuchae* who had actually an infection caused by *Trichophyton violaceum*. Silvestrs Rubins highlighted 100 subtypes of histiocytoses, subdivided into 5 large groups (fig. 3).

Many dermatologic advances were announced. Klaus Fritz (Germany) advocated the pure yellow light in pro-yellow lasers with its special wavelength of 577 nm for vascular lesions in dark skin. He also documented the erbium laser as very effective in treating acne and other scars and for skin rejuvenation, while A. Trelles Mario (Spain) emphasized the use of lasers for cutaneous aging, tissue remodeling and scars. Michael H. Gold (USA) recommended laser therapy for acne and rosacea, while Klaus Eisenle (Austria) underscored experiences with acne and other facial dermatoses in clinical practice. Ilona Hartmane (Latvia) illuminated cutaneous manifestations of internal diseases. Kristofers Septe (Latvia) reviewed 29 scabies cases and found 69% exhibited burrows on the sole, a previously undocumented clinical finding. Prof. Nicolas Kluger (Finland) noted that immigration patterns to Finland have brought skin of color patient concerns to Nordic countries. A pilot study by Skaidra Valiukeviciene's group led by Lukas Šemeklis documented female sex, high body mass index, high number of melanocytic nevi, and freckles as significant risk factors for cutaneous melanoma. Food allergies were underscored by Robert A. Schwartz (USA), who stressed that red meat allergy is unique in three important ways, as it is a delayed hypersensitivity reaction, is induced by a carbohydrate rather than a protein, and has linkage to tick



Figure 2. BADV President Andris Rubins, Professor of Dermatovenerology at the University of Latvia; Prof. Ivars Kalviņš, President of the Latvian Academy of Sciences and Chairman of the University of Latvia Council; Prof. Indriķis Muižnieks, Rector of University of Latvia (left to right)

bites. This challenging subject is particularly salient considering this unique connection between ticks and red meat allergy, the expanding tick territory, and the dependency by so many on meat products mostly by dietary consumption, but also in medications and medical devices. Marcis Septe (Latvia) divulged contact dermatitis mimicking granuloma annulare, lichen planus, and psoriasis as unusual and challenging to diagnose. Axel zur Hausen (Holland) proposed Merkel cell carcinoma therapy with anti-Bcl-2 alone and in combination with former treatment regimens of small cell lung cancer as possible emerging options for PD-(L)1 inhibition refractory Merkel cell carcinoma. Pille Konno (Estonia) documented teledermatology and teledermoscopy as an increasingly important way to reduce face-to-face contact and enable access to care for melanoma and other skin cancer screening, while Alise Balcere (Latvia) focused upon dermatoscopic and histopathologic



Figure 3. Head of the Department of Dermatovenerology of the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Latvia and Head of the Scientific Committee of the 19th BADV Congress, Assoc. Professor Silvestrs Rubins



Figure 4. Beautiful Riga: a relaxing stroll through historic Riga

correlations of non-melanoma skin cancer. Aleksejs Zavorins (Latvia) trumpeted the extraordinary potential of artificial intelligence in dermatoscopic diagnosing of skin cancer. Chien-Hui Hong (Taiwan) divulged the five-year trend of severe cutaneous adverse drug reactions (SCARs) in tropical Taiwan. The culprit drugs causing SCARs include antibiotics (31%), nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (14%), carbamazepine (7%), proton pump inhibitors (10%), drugs of uncategorized groups (14%), and unknown (17%). Lauma Valeine (Latvia)'s lecture, "Proteome: New paradigm of skin aging", delineated a topical formulation containing extracts from *Arthrobacter agilis* that demonstrated significant improvements in the reduction of aging signs such as wrinkles in a short-term study of 55 female volunteers.

This important international congress concluded with a valuable workshop and by honoring young physician trainees. A few received certificates for best presentation and were awarded a prize sponsored by "AS Grindeks" and the BADV. Posters were presented by Simona Alomary (USA), Andra Derveniece (Latvia), Amar D. Desai (USA), Edmund Janniger (USA), Maya Jodidio (USA), Jurijs Markovs (Latvia), Kristofers Septe (Latvia), Amit Singal (USA), Rohan Shah (USA), and Ilze Upeniece (Latvia). The joint American Polish presentation by Amar D. Desai MPH, Anna Fabczak-Kubicka MD, Joanna Brydak-Godowska MD, PhD *et al.* resulted in special recognition for Amar Desai. Awards for the best presentations from young doctors were given to Karolina Baltrušaityte (Lithuania), Amar D. Desai (USA), Tereza Pavloviča (Latvia), and Ingel Soop (Estonia). The interesting workshop, prepared by the "Inomedis Group", was led by Leonardo Marini (Italy), who demonstrated the latest possibilities in laser therapy. Attendees admired the beauty of historic Riga (fig. 4).