

Conference report: The 13th World Congress of Biological Psychiatry, Copenhagen, Denmark 18–22.06.2017

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The 13th World Congress of Biological Psychiatry organized by the World Federation of Societies of Biological Psychiatry took place at the Bella Center in Copenhagen on 18–22.06.2017. The congress was co-organized by the Danish Society of Biological Psychiatry.

The topics discussed at the congress included not only the current progress in molecular biology, the development of novel psychotropic medications, but also the current state of knowledge and recent discoveries in the field of biological methods such as electroconvulsive therapy (ECT), repetitive transcranial magnetic stimulation (rTMS), transcranial direct current stimulation (tDCS) or deep brain stimulation (DBS) in psychiatry. Thanks to the parallel sessions, the number of presentations presented during the five days of the conference was really impressive. However, impressive was not only the number of lectures, but also their quality. In addition to the lectures of such outstanding scientists as Masatoshi Takeda, Per Bech, David Taylor, Gregers Wegener, Eduard Vieta, Michael Grözinger, Andrew Nierenberger, and Michael Bauer, results of the research were also presented by the young researchers from Taiwan, Japan, the USA, Korea, Brazil, Chile (mainly presentations about rTMS, tDCS and sessions concerning neuroimaging and genetics). Thematic poster sessions were also very interesting, every day of the congress hundreds of posters presenting results of the research from around the world could be viewed (poster session topics included cognitive function impairment, sleep and eating disorders, methods of neurostimulation, depression, bipolar disorders and psychotic disorders, child and adolescent psychiatry, suicide, inflammation, molecular neurobiology, pharmacology, pharmacogenetics, neuropathology, and neurophysiology). Among the topics of the lectures, there was a great interest in presentations concerning the use of mobile applications in diagnostics and treatment of bipolar disorders and sessions concerning pharmacogenetics and brain imaging methods as tools for optimizing pharmacotherapy in psychiatry, as well as sessions about psychoimmunology and the use of techniques based on EEG monitoring in psychiatry.

Despite the development of medical technology, development of imaging methods and methods of brain stimulation, in terms of the treatment of psychiatric disorders, electroconvulsive therapy is still an irreplaceable method – in many disorders more effective method than pharmacotherapy. The lectures at the WFSBP congress concerned not only the mechanism of action of ECT (which is still not fully understood yet), but also the efficacy of ECT in drug-resistant psychotic disorders, catatonia in the course of affective and psychotic disorders, efficacy in the treatment of behavioral disorders in autism spectrum disorders and in psychomotor agitation in the course of dementia (a great lecture presenting clinical experience and results of the research was presented by Adriana Hermida, USA). Much has been said about the efforts of the FDA to limit the use of electroconvulsive therapy, which evoke opposition among psychiatrists.

The last decade can certainly be called a decade of return to lithium. During the conference many lectures were devoted to lithium carbonate and its use in the treatment of mental disorders (one of the session was even entitled “Rediscovering lithium”). The role of lithium in the prevention of suicide (Jimmi Nielsen, Denmark) and in the treatment of mood disorders (Janusz Rybakowski, Poland), as well as the neuroprotective properties of lithium (chair of the session: Galia Agam, Israel) and the effect of lithium on renal function, including the risk of end-stage renal failure, were discussed (the participants of the session “Rediscovering lithium”, under the chairmanship of Professor David Taylor, were impressed by the lecture of Ursula Werneke from Sweden, who explained the complex effects of lithium on glomeruli and renal tubules in a very clear and transparent manner and discussed how to treat patients with renal dysfunction which occurred in the course of therapy with lithium).

There were also lectures concerning ketamine (Carlos Zarate from the United States discussed the mechanism of action of ketamine, Declan McLoughlin from Ireland presented the results of KEEP-WELL study on ketamine for depression relapse prevention following ECT), inflammatory markers (e.g., session on inflammation markers of peripheral blood in depression spectrum, chair: Professor Piotr Gałecki) catecholamines, anhedonia and reward system as well as cannabinoids (lectures on the mechanism of action and the relation between cannabinoids and psychosis as well as the effects of cannabinoids on cognitive functions).

The conference was extremely interesting and the topic selection was so wide that everyone could find lectures on topics that were most interesting to him/her. The problem arises when it turns out that the most interesting lectures for a particular participant are lectures which take place at the same time, but these are just the cons of parallel sessions.

The next, 14th WFSBP congress will be held in Vancouver, Canada, 02–06.06.2019.

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