

AGMS/DEÄV Videoconference, 04 September 2021

We few, we happy few, we band of brothers;
For he today that joins the videoconference
with me
Shall be my brother; be he ne'er so vile,
This day shall gentle his condition;
And gentlemen in England now a-bed
Shall think themselves accurs'd they were
not here,¹

Wir wenige, wir wenige glückliche, wir Bande
von Brüdern;
Denn er nimmt heute an der Videokonferenz
mit mir
Soll mein Bruder sein; sei er nie so gemein,
Dieser Tag wird seinen Zustand mildern;
Und meine Herren in England jetzt im Bett
Soll sich verflucht fühlen, dass sie nicht hier
waren,

While it wasn't quite that dramatic, it was a historic moment for many. Zoom, and the concerted efforts of the organisers over many weeks' planning and rehearsing, made the AGMS/DEÄV videoconference possible.

The proceedings were started by the President, **Dr Michael Bohndorf**, whose childhood was marked by a passion for Europe that was not inherited by the next generation, who prefer to explore further afield. Interest in Europe has waned, but must be rekindled.

The ties between Germany and the UK were marked 20 years ago by a flood of German physicians turning to the UK where the economic situation was so much more favourable.

A united and rejuvenated Europe, which has been at peace for over 70 years, will be in the position to overcome the global challenges of geopolitical conflict – see Syria and Afghanistan – the catastrophic effects of global warming, and world-wide pandemics.

Cordula – unflappable and charming at all times despite occasional technical hitches and even some unintentional screen-sharing, then introduced without further ado...

Richard Bowers

Who first gave a potted history of inhalers, of Egyptian men harvesting plants for the ladies to inhale, and of French and German nebulisers. Even very popular and effective cigarettes, of which French novelist Marcel Proust was an acute and ardent fan, stumbling from one pharmacy to the next for his next drag of antispasmodics.

The problem with MDIs and their propellants soon became apparent. The global warming potential of 2 puffs being equivalent to driving 19 miles in an average car. The Freon and other manmade CFCs used in the day were thought at the time to be inert, but the electron capture detector invented by James Lovelock quickly unmasked them as potent catalysts in the destruction of the ozone layer. This led to the ozone hole and contributed to global warming.

The Montreal Protocol signed in 1987 recruited many international players to reduce stratospheric pollution and levels of CFCs fell sharply. New CFC-free propellants were found, but none were truly effective in reducing atmospheric CO₂ which, once it has been emitted, will remain in the atmosphere for thousands of years.

This heralded the introduction of propellant-free dry powder inhalers whose use is not uncontroversial as many patients find them difficult to use, and striking the right balance between patient-friendly formulations and environmentally-friendly delivery system remains fraught. One common disadvantage is that all these devices are made of plastic. Great hope rests on a new

¹ With grateful thanks to W. Shakespeare, Henry V (Heinrich V)

propellant, HFC-152a with a far lower global warming potential than the original CFCs. This knowledge has already prompted GPs and hospital doctors to review the systems they use, and even to think about how they are disposed of.

As recent once freak events – floods, fires, landslides – become more common, the situation has become serious. A new report has confirmed that humans are having a significant impact on global warming, so it is of paramount importance that the production of CO₂ be stopped.

Recommendations by NICE and the British Thoracic Society are pointing the way to more patient- and environmentally-friendly treatment forms in the future. MIDs account for 4% of the massive NHS carbon footprint.

Steffi had kindly prepared a German translation of the talk which I'm sure she would be pleased to share.

Chris Douglas,

of Yorkshire provenance with an ongoing history of excelling at German (well we *DO* pronounce “butter” the same), totally fearless in his pronunciation of Czech and Polish villages, described the chronology of German-speaking contributions to psychiatry.

Among the greats he mentioned *Sigmund Freud* with whose conscious mind, psychological defence mechanisms, Oedipus complex and Id, ego and superego we are all familiar.

Emil Kraepelin gave us biological psychiatry, manic depression, dementia praecox and psychopathic personality. *Eugen Bleuler* described schizophrenia, schizoid, autism and ambivalence. Freud's Swiss contemporary *Carl Jung* explored analytical psychology, mooted a “collective consciousness”, suggested anima and anime, proposed archetypes, and came up with intra- and extraversion.

Karl Jaspers explored psychopathology, described the form and content of symptoms, defined primary and secondary delusions and, despite all that, was also an existential philosopher. *Hermann Rohrschach*, the suave dashing Swiss psychiatrist, gave his name to the ink blots. The art became more scientific with the work of *Kurt Schneider* (endogenous and reactive depression), *Fritz Perls* (Gestalt therapy), *Franz Kallmann* (eugenics, biological and genetic origins of disorders, twin studies, and the endocrine Kallmann syndrome).

Victor Frankl, *Hans Asperger*, *Heinz Kohut* and *Elizabeth Kübler Ross* and *Otto Kernberg* with logotherapy, autism spectrum disorder, self-psychology and death and dying, borderline personality and transference focussed psychotherapy respectively rounded off the talk.

Everard (aka Vincent) Braganza

Gave a less medical but well-researched and no less interesting insight into salt. He got the ball rolling with a brief overview of the history of salt during which Portuguese salt was exported to Syria, and the myth that Roman centurions were paid in salt was shattered (they were given salt as a bonus). The fact that salt is and always has been essential for life itself was underlined by its importance for preserving many foodstuffs, thus enabling our forefathers to survive the harsh winters.

Salt is extracted on all our continents and fulfils many functions, many of them even political. Salt has been used as wages, our ever-inventive and insatiable leaders imposed taxes on salt. Even whole cities were even based on salt, Liverpool as the chief exporting port for salt, and Munich where Heinrich der Löwe/Henry the Lion actually destroyed a bridge built by the church represented by Bishop Otto and built his own in 1156 – 1158, so he could collect the duties instead. Eventually the Pope mediated a compromise whereby Freising Monastery was paid 30% of the

revenue. In 1930, Mahatma Gandhi headed the salt march for some 240 miles to protest against British rule in India.

The three main types of salt, rock salt, sea salt and industrial salt have many uses: for cooking and flavouring, it used to be sprayed onto roads for de-icing, and almost everything else, which is saying a lot. The Assyrians even poured salt onto the earth in a chemical scorched-earth policy to deter pursuers.

Particularly ingenious were the Portuguese tide mills, for which vast expanses of land and water were harnessed so the tides would drive mills to grind cereals into flour. When this was no longer commercially viable the lakes were converted for salt extraction by evaporation and drying. Particularly high-quality salt was skimmed off the water surface with “borboletas” (Portuguese butterflies) on sunny, windy days. Once the season was ended the rock-hard salt on the beds of the salt lakes was broken up and sold to be used in salt mills. One particular entrepreneur has even created his own mini Dead Sea, and very salty water is a natural habitat for brine shrimp which, with the help of algae, turn flamingos pink.

Kurt Trübner

Finished off the proceedings with a fascinating portrayal of forensic age diagnostics. In view of the influx of refugees it has become financially imperative to distinguish between minors – on whom €80,000 are spent – and adults, who “only” cost us €20,000 per capita. This also has implications for criminal law, pension proceedings, the sex and age of skeletons, and sadly even pornography.

German courts must instigate proceedings involving unaccompanied minors which are not medical but forensic, and therefore the medics involved are not bound to secrecy. While some asylum applicants “massage” their age to gain benefits, many truly do not know their real age.

The age estimation process itself is interdisciplinary, and involves forensic doctors, paediatric radiologists, dentists and paediatricians. A particular problem is requiring the subjects to undress for the examinations. Almost 25 persons were examined at the peak in 2018, 93% of whom were male, 7% female.

The use of forensic age diagnostics spans a number of laws in Germany, for instance criminal, family, and immigration and social laws.

The *history* concentrates on collecting information on the family background (many countries in the Middle East do not celebrate birthdays), educational background, the reasons for escaping, the duration of escape (the longest to date being three years as the refugees worked *en route* to pay off the traffickers), and any abuse they might have suffered.

The scientific basis of the *diagnostics* involves estimating physical development, skeletal maturation, and dental development. X-Rays of the left hand provide a well-documented and evidence-based indication of age depending on epiphyseal status, MRIs of the sternoclavicular joint and its epiphyses have confirmatory value. Dating the wisdom teeth is a further factor in estimating age.

If there is any realistic doubt about the applicant’s real age (below or above 18), he or she is given the benefit of the doubt and classed as a minors. 75% of applicants give a false age when asked!

And last but not least, while epigenetic age estimation is broadly reliable, it is not yet suitable for age estimation between the ages of 14 and 18. There is scanty correlation with better established and proven indicators of age, but these are early days...

Finally, I would like to thank and congratulate the organisers who grappled with and overcame all sorts of problems from months before the conference right up to the conference itself.

I would also like to thank all those members who sent us congratulatory emails, they truly appreciated the time and effort that went into the conference.