

## 111th DOG (German ophthalmological society) congress Berlin 19-22 september 2013

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The 111<sup>th</sup> DOG (German Ophthalmological Society) Congress took place in Berlin from 19 to 22 September 2013, with over 4,500 attendees. Under the motto “Excellent Vision — Vision of Excellence”, ophthalmologists from 76 countries discussed the latest findings in diagnostics and therapy, and also issues of promoting the next generation of young ophthalmologists. Aside from the scientific highlights such as the Keynote Lectures, the new practice-oriented compact program “DOG Update — State of the Art 2013” proved very popular. The courses on business administration and human resources management were also fully booked. In total, there were a good 10 % more attendees than in previous years.

True to the congress motto, we introduced a series of innovative session formats to promote the younger generation of scientists. It seems to be imperative to make efforts to gain the best minds through appropriate and up-to-date measures. Hence, this year’s DOG Congress opened with “Skill Building” on the program for the first time, a course imparting basic knowledge of scientific work targeted at physicians in further training. Another new feature was the symposium “Excellence needs Education und Examination”, which introduced the various national and international training and examination models for young doctors. In addition, a symposium on basic research provided information on “German Research Foundation (DFG) Promotion of Young Scientists”. There were also development opportunities for staff in managerial positions, including courses on business administration and human resources management. These courses enjoyed excellent attendance, and response to the new proposed courses was very good.

Ophthalmology has always been a “feminine discipline”. Thus, combining science, clinical work, and the family plays a significant role. Nowadays, only a practice that is run as a family-friendly concern on a practical basis — and not merely professed to be such on a website — will be in a position to attract the best minds for ophthalmology in the long run, but also to retain them in this institution. Part-time working models for colleagues with family and children are also crucial. Apart from specialist aspects, those of leadership and motivation are of vital importance today to the so-called Generation Y (the generation which asks ‘why’). As I see it, three key characteristics are important: Integrity — we must not mislead or deceive anyone, reliability — we must not make promises we cannot keep, and authenticity — we must not try to be something we are not, or at least something we are not yet. The target must be that our students can one day proclaim: “You made no promises, but you kept your word!”

Yet another innovation of this year’s DOG congress was the compact further training program “DOG Update — State of the Art”, which the congress organizers created especially for doctors in private practice and clinicians after having completed residency. On Saturday and Sunday, in 12 sessions of 45 min each, experts presented the most important publications to appear in the last 12 months, including the placement of findings and recommendations in a practice-oriented context. Attendance at these updates was excellent right to the very end. This is reflected in the figures: More than 4,500 attendees visited the DOG Congress 2013, over 450 more than last year — this corresponds to an increase of more than 10 %. We were particularly pleased to see a rise in the number of our colleagues from private practice at the congress.

The Keynote Lectures were among the scientific highlights this year. Professor Gabriele Lang from Ulm gave the opening lecture on “Perspectives in the Therapy of Diabetic Retinopathy”, Professor Ursula Schlötzer-Schrehardt from Erlangen lectured on “Pseudoexfoliation Syndrome/Glaucoma: Molecular

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Basis and Clinical Perspectives”. Professor Donald Tan from Singapore and Professor Andrew Dick from Bristol, UK, added further top-class expertise to the program. A total of 1,034 scientific contributions — distributed over 67 symposia, 12 updates, 19 free lectures sessions, 30 courses, 31 poster sessions, and three keynote lectures — competed for the ophthalmologists’ attention.

The further training curriculum of our annual congress has been changing. Cooperation, leadership, and management are increasingly becoming a major focus of our professional profile. First and foremost, we are and will remain doctors who care about the wellbeing of our patients, not least in psychosocial terms. Secondly, we are physicians working in conservative diagnostics and medication therapy or as specially trained micro-surgeons. In the universities in particular, we are also teachers, primarily of interested students, who we always regard as future residents. In addition, we are teachers for the continuing education of resident doctors as well as our colleagues in private practice, but also for interested members of the public. Today, it is still the successfully treated patients who remain the most loyal! We are also passionate researchers, as can be seen from the volume *Top-Class Research in Ophthalmology* (“*Spitzenforschung in der Ophthalmologie*”). However, we can only satisfactorily embody all these important mainstays of our self-defined

profession in the long run if we are economically independent and well-versed in management. We should strive to breathe life into the largest possible intersection of all the above-mentioned responsibilities every day.

With regard to research, there should be consensus today that only the symbiosis of doctor and basic researcher can generate translational relevant findings. With this in mind, every department of ophthalmology should have as its goal the establishment of a chair of experimental ophthalmology, eye to eye with the clinician, in order to generate scientific dialogue that is as productive and sustainable as possible, which will be reflected not least in the performance-based allocation of funds by the faculties. Nevertheless, leaders today have to learn that not every young colleague has to be a brilliant researcher! A Department of Ophthalmology also has need of excellent clinicians and especially microsurgeons. “Research alone does not fill your cashboxes”.

On an area of 1,904 square meters, 94 exhibitors presented their products in the Industry Exhibition. Fourteen industry symposia and four workshops also took place. Lastly, the social fringe program provided focal points of a social, cultural, and sporting nature, such as “DOG Clubbing” in the legendary Berlin cinema Kosmos, “DOG in Concert” and the traditional benefit marathon, the “Eye Run”, creating a successful balance to the specialist content.