

# Sino-German Sleep Medicine Cooperation

During the World Sleep Apnea Congress in 1997 in Marburg, contacts in the field of sleep apnea were started between China and Germany. Several sleep apnea researchers from China attended this world congress and one young person received a young investigator award. This person was Dr. Fang Han, who initiated the Sino-German Sleep Medicine Cooperation from the Chinese side many years later. In addition to this there are a number of earlier links between Chinese and German sleep researchers, mainly in the field of psychiatry in sleep and in association with the Max Planck Institute in Munich.

In April 2008, the first meeting on sleep medicine including Chinese and German participants took place in Harbin, a large city in northern China. This meeting served as the inaugural meeting to initiate a formal cooperation between Chinese and German sleep researchers (■ Fig. 1). The organizers on the Chinese side were Dr. Tinli Li (Harbin), Dr. Xiang-

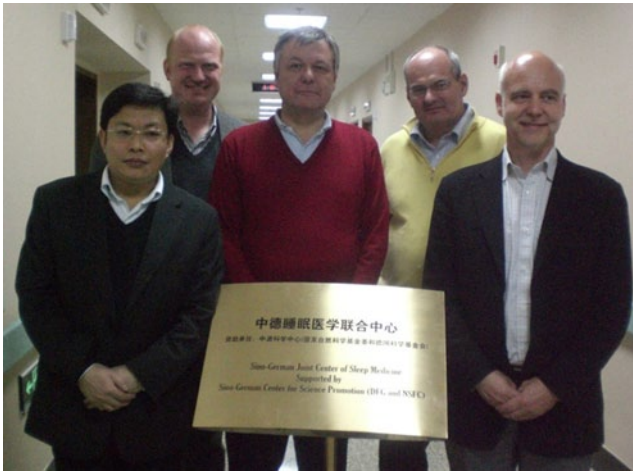
dong Tang (Chengdu), and Dr. Fang Han (Beijing). The organizers from the German side were Dr. Thomas Pollmächer (Ingolstadt), and Dr. Thomas Penzel (Berlin). With these people, a broad area of sleep medicine was covered. This included pneumology, psychiatry, neurology, basic and applied research as well as clinical sleep medicine. A cooperation research grant was submitted to the Sino-German Center for Research Promotion, which is a unique institution in Beijing, created by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG) and the Chinese counterpart (Chinese National Science Foundation) to promote joint research and exchange of scientists. The cooperation research entitled “Sino-German Joint Center of Sleep Medicine” that was submitted in 2009 enable the exchange of students and faculty. Workshops and exchange visits were planned. The focus of the cooperation was on four major topics: (1) metabolic aspects of narcolepsy and molecular

mechanisms of sleep–wake regulation, (2) contemporary epidemics—reduced sleep and disturbed rhythm, (3) development of sleep medicine: the important role of sleep apnea, and (4) traditional Chinese medicine and sleep disorders.

The grant was accepted in December 2009 and a number of joint conferences, workshops, and exchange visits were organized. The first joint meeting and the founding meeting of the Sino-German Joint Center of Sleep Medicine was in Beijing in April 2010. As part of this conference, the Sleep Center in Beijing (■ Fig. 2) was inaugurated. At the subsequent German Sleep Society Congresses in 2010 and 2011, joint Chinese–German symposia were launched. Similar events took place at some Chinese Sleep Society Congresses. German documents, such as the Guideline for Non-restorative Sleep, were translated into Chinese and distributed in China with the additional support of the Sino-German Center for Research



**Fig. 1** ▲ A photo of all participants of the initial meeting in Harbin 2008 at which the Sino-German Center of Sleep Medicine was planned



**Fig. 2** ◀ After the official inauguration ceremony in April 2010, the sign of the Sino-German Center of Sleep Medicine is presented within the sleep center at the People's University Hospital of Beijing. *Left to right* Fang Han, Andreas Schuld, Thomas Pollmächer, Nikolaus Netzer, Thomas Penzel

Promotion. It was also possible to translate the new AASM scoring rules into Chinese and distribute these in a similar manner as the German translation of the new AASM scoring rules had been distributed in Germany.

The third Sino-German Sleep Center conference took place in Berlin in May 2012 with many additional attendees. At this conference, a call for publications was announced in order to organize a focus issue of *Somnologie* on the Sino-German Sleep Center. Five publications have been compiled for this focus issue of *Somnologie*.

These five papers cover a broad range of sleep medicine and specifically are targeted to basic sleep research, epidemiologic data, and new methods. The study by Linghui Yang et al. is an international collaboration on the effects of cued and contextual fear on sleep in mice. This basic sleep study addresses goal 2 of the joint research collaboration. In the large epidemiological study by von Ruesten et al. on daytime sleepiness and chronic diseases, some results from the EPIC study in Potsdam address the same goal. One much more clinically oriented paper was presented by Högl on a more objective diagnosis of REM sleep behavior disorder. This disorder and its diagnosis are of high contemporary interest. The paper by Zhang et al. on the incidence of narcolepsy following the 2009 H1N1 pandemic is also of great public interest. This review paper surveys recent studies on the increased incidence of narcolepsy and tries to draw some conclusions. The methods paper presented in this context reflects a very promising and

future directing method. The paper is presented by Henning and Patzak on continuous blood pressure measurement by using pulse transit time. This method is now applied in patients with sleep disordered breathing and with this the other major goal of the cooperation was addressed. There were also presentations on traditional Chinese medicine, goal 4, but these talks were difficult to compile into study reports as they are usual for Western style journals. With these contributions we are confident to have broad coverage of the Sino-German Center on Sleep Medicine and we hope that this intense cooperation continues.

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