Meetings, Transactions and Society News

As an International Society of Dermatology (ISD) Regional Meeting, the International Congress on Dermatological Care for All has been held annually since 2007. I had the great privilege to attend the 3rd International Congress on Dermatological Care for All, which was held in Addis Ababa and Mekele, Ethiopia, 24-27 November 2009. Under the patronage of Ethiopian Embassy in Rome and Italian Embassy in Addis Ababa, the promoter of this congress was National Institute of Health, Migration and Poverty (NIHMP), managed by Professor Aldo Morrone of Rome, Italy.

The opening session was held at Italian Cultural Institute, Addis Ababa on November 24. After welcome by Italian and Ethiopian authorities, Professor Morrone, the president of the congress and NIHMP Director General, opened the conference. In the first session, "Community Dermatology", five interesting topics were presented by distinguished lecturers including professors Ryan (UK), Accorsi (Italy), Farese (Italy), Tebebe Y.B. (Ethiopia) and Klaus (USA). The second session was "Health and Human Capacity Building", in which professors Grossmann (Germany/Tanzania), Morrone (Italy) and Dr. Fuller (UK) presented lectures entitled: "Human capacity building for dermatology. Meeting the needs form a sub-Saharan perspective"; "Dermatology, migration and human rights"; and "Teaching dermatology in new places"; respectively. During a coffee break, a photo of all participants who were attending the first day of the congress was taken (fig. 1).

Scientific program continued after lunch with two more sessions: "Case Reports" and "Mycobacterial Diseases". During the former, several interesting cases were presented by dermatologists or resident dermatologists from Ethiopia. In the latter, two lectures including a superb one on the treatment of leprosy reactions by professor Naafs (Netherlands) were presented. The first day was ended by the "Gala Dinner" at the Italian Embassy in Addis Ababa.

The second day began with an air travel from Addis Ababa to Mekele, the capital of Tigray region in northern Ethiopia. After arrival, participants transferred to Milano Hotel, which was both the Congress Venue in Mekele and the place of residence of almost all congress attendees. About 10:30 the participants transferred to the Ayder University Referral Hospital, where they enjoyed an Ethiopian traditional coffee ceremony followed by a visit to the Italian Dermatological Centre/IISMAS (International Institute of Social, Medical, and Anthropological Sciences). In the afternoon, a welcome session by Tigray authorities was provided and followed by a scientific session on "Neglected and misdiagnosed diseases". In this session, 7 lectures on diseases such as cutaneous leishmaniasis and scabies were presented by 5 speakers: Professors and Drs. Klaus (USA) and Khatami (Iran) (each presented two lectures), Romani (Australia), Geilen (Germany) and Abraham T (Ethiopia). After the end of the session, all attendees were invited to the dinner offered by Tigray Health Bureau.

In the morning of November 26, a scientific session entitled "Ethio-Italian cooperation" was held. It was followed by one of the most interesting sessions of the congress: "Clinical Session at Ayder Hospital". In this amazing session, Professor Morrone and his colleagues at the Italian Dermatological Centre/IISMAS presented a dozen of "suffering persons" (professor Morrone’s suggested substitution for the term "patients") from different skin diseases including diffuse cutaneous leishmaniasis, leprosy, lymphedema and others. This session provided a special opportunity for discussing the diagnosis and treatment of such cases with internationally known experts in tropical skin diseases such as professors Ryan (UK), Naafs (Netherlands), Grossman (Germany/Tanzania), Klaus (USA) and Tyring (USA) (fig. 2). The first session in the afternoon was entitled "Route Maps for Health between North and South of the World", in which Dr. Sethi (USA) presented an excellent lecture on "Imported skin diseases". Her lecture was followed by 3 more interesting presentations including one by Dr. Gaido (Kenya) and two other lectures by professor Veraldi (Italy). The last session of the day was focused on "STIs and HIV" and included 6 lectures by Drs. Potocnik (Slovenia), Pala (Italy), Tyring (USA), Naafs (Netherlands), Yeshambel B. (Ethiopia) and Vaidya (Zimbabwe). The dinner was served at the Top Hill Hotel.

November 27 was the last day of the congress. The last two scientific sessions of the congress were "Eczemas" and "Numberless ways to healing". In the former, Drs. Shibeshi D, Robel A, Mengitsu H. and Kassahun D.B. (all from Ethiopia) and Dr. Bradley (Sweden) gave interesting lectures on different aspects of eczematous
dermatoses (fig. 3). In the latter, three presentations on the subjects of available resources and affordable therapeutic interventions regarding skin diseases in Ethiopia were related by Drs. Murgia (Italy), Baraldo (Italy) and Shimelis D (Ethiopia). The scientific program of the congress ended by closing remarks from professor Morrone including a superb lecture entitled: "the Route of Lampedusa". In the afternoon, there was a visit to the "Health Center of Adi Shumduhun", after which, all attendees were invited to the "IISMAS House" for a friendly dinner.

Although the congress was officially closed one day earlier, on November 28, a free post congress tour to Hawzien to visit a rock church followed by a trip to Adigrat to visit the "Pediatrics and Maternity Ward at Adigrat Hospital" had been planned by the congress organizers. Most of the congress attendees participated in this amazing one-day trip and enjoyed the wonderful scenery and a glimpse of extremely rich culture and civilization of Ethiopia. After returning to Mekele, the participants had their dinner in a restaurant, where the delicious Ethiopian cuisine was accompanied by wonderful traditional Ethiopian live music and dance.

In brief, I found the 3rd International Congress on Dermatological Care for All: Common Diseases for Neglected People, one of the best Congresses that I have ever attended, not only because of its really rich scientific program on tropical skin diseases and community dermatology or its internationally distinguished lecturers, but also for its wonderful friendly atmosphere, which really helped me to communicate with and learn from almost all 70 participants who were from 14 different countries.

Respectfully submitted,

Alireza Khatami, MD, MSc(PH)
Tehran, Iran