

Letter from the President

Karl Arne Jessen, President of EFOMP

Writing this letter a few days before we celebrate the centenary of the discovery of X-rays by Wilhelm Conrad Röntgen on November 8th 1895 in Würzburg leads me to reflect for a moment on the involvement of radiation physics in health care. At a stroke, Röntgen's discovery, together with Becquerel's discovery of radioactivity the following year, made the direct involvement of physicists in health care a necessity.

For many years it was as individuals and very often as consultants; nearly fifty years passed after the discovery before the first organisation in Medical Physics was formed in Europe. IPSM/HPA in the UK celebrated its 50th years anniversary two years ago. The hazards associated with ionising radiation, painfully realised during these first decades, required the involvement of experts in radiation physics in protection of staff and patients in hospitals. The discovery initiated a technical development which nobody could imagine 100 years ago. Today there is an extreme necessity for co-operation between different professions in respect and understanding of the capability of the professional skills. In this modern health care orchestra the physical scientist has an important, and in the future even stronger, role to play.

In September EFOMP joined with the German National Society for Medical Physics (DGMP), IOMP and IUPESM to celebrate the discovery at the Röntgen Centenary Congress in Würzburg at a place only few metres from the historical location. The Congress was a great success for Medical Physics in Europe, well organised by the local organising committee headed by the Congress President Professor Jürgen Richter, with scientific sessions of high quality, an interesting exhibition and social events. The Congress also provided the platform for the annual EFOMP meetings which attracted a higher representation than usual from national organisations, especially from eastern Europe, which is very much welcomed by EFOMP. Their presence is important at a time when there is a pressing need to harmonise the differences between countries in Europe particularly within the European Union, where freedom of movement and employment has been in effect since 1992.

Another important event was the meeting on Quality Assurance in Radiotherapy organised by ISRO/IAEA and held in Vienna in May. Because up to 80% of the medical physicists in some of our member organisations are working in areas related to radiotherapy, QA in this field is of course of great concern to EFOMP. The ability of the medical physicist to quantify physical and technical parameters may persuade our clinical colleagues to strengthen their approach to the subject in their area of responsibility, which is in no way an easy task. A joint working group with ESTRO has been acting during 95 in order to reach a general agreement on staffing levels for the physics support to radiotherapy and a consensus based on total staff was presented at the ESTRO meeting in Gardone. It is very important that medical physicists speak with one voice in Europe and have a common understanding also on professional matters.

A second Summer School in radiophysics related to Diagnostic Radiology has just successfully been run at the European Centre for Theoretical Physics in Trieste with nearly 50 participants. EFOMP is very grateful for the support given by the centre and by IOMP by which made it possible to keep the registration fee at a reasonable level.

It now seems likely that the profession of Medical Physicist will be defined in the revised version of the Patient Directive and the degree of involvement in radiotherapy, nuclear medicine and diagnostic radiology will be described. This will hopefully form the basis for a full recognition of our profession which still is a decision to be made by our national health authorities. EFOMP strongly recommends member organisations to establish national registration schemes and to submit such schemes for approval by EFOMP. Dr. Philip Dendy has recently been officially appointed as EFOMP registrar.

This is my last letter as EFOMP President and I will like to express my thanks for all the support I have had in my three year period of service, especially from the group of Officers. I wish my successor, Professor Fridtjof Nüsslin, every success in the never-ending struggle for our profession and for our Federation. We must all unite in support of our common goals through our daily work.

EFOMP Celebrates Röntgen:

Centenary Conference and EFOMP meetings in Würzburg, 20-24 September 1995

Wolf W. Seelentag, Secretary General of EFOMP

Würzburg seemed to be the obvious place to celebrate Röntgen's discovery of X-rays 100 years ago - not only the medical physicists felt that: more than 30 large events connected with Röntgen and all sorts of applications of X-rays were organised in Würzburg this year. In this way all could benefit from visiting the interesting exhibition on the subject in the "Residenz". The annual meeting of the German Society for Medical Physics (DGMP) was one of these events, perfectly organised by Prof. Richter (EFOMP's previous Secretary General) and his team - and EFOMP had been invited to join.

The meeting took place in the Conference Centre, close to the town centre: several lecture theatres and meeting rooms, plus a spacious industrial and poster exhibition, providing the opportunity for many fruitful discussions. The special nature of the meeting was emphasised by a large number of invited presentations on history and future of X-rays, not limited to just the medical field. Let me mention just two - the first talk and the last. The opening lecture was also directed towards the interested public (and therefore the only lecture held in German): Prof. Spindler (Innsbruck) reported not only on the x-ray examinations of "Ötzi", the Neolithic mummy found in the Ötztal Alps in 1991, but told us the whole history in a manner which was both scientifically sound and interesting. A fascinating ending to the conference was Prof. Van de Wetering's (Amsterdam) description of X-ray investigations of Rembrandt's work. X-ray examinations of paintings are helped by the fact that the white pigment used for light and dark shading contains lead. He described several surprising findings, including one example showing a common problem for Rembrandt and most medical physicists of today - coping with the economic situation. Rembrandt had painted Salome, having just cut off the head of John the Baptist. It seemed that he had probably been unable sell this painting - so he changed the sword into a walking stick, the bleeding head into a flower basket, and sold the painting, now of Flora. Fortunately he did not have to change the happy smile on Salome's face - it suited Flora quite nicely.

Another nice feature of the congress was the historical poster exhibition. Each national society had been invited to describe the development of X-ray applications, or an outstanding individual contributing to it, in its country. Posters from 19 European and 4 overseas countries formed a most interesting overview. This large figure is a first indication of the Europe-wide attendance at the conference. The special occasion and generous travel grants from several sources also resulted in the most numerous attendance at EFOMP Committee and Council Meetings ever observed! The Committee Meetings were quite crowded (I had to organise additional chairs again and again), and Council Meeting was attended by delegates from 18 member societies, plus observers from 5 other countries.

A major activity during the last year had been Quality Assurance in Radiation Therapy. In October 1994 ESTRO had also invited delegates from many national medical physics societies to a meeting on this subject in Brussels. The resulting consensus statement has since been published in *Radiotherapy and Oncology* 35 61-73 (1995). ISRO and IAEA had organised another meeting on QA in Vienna during May 1995 at which EFOMP was represented by the President and several other individuals. It has to be admitted, however, that EFOMP had not been very active on

this issue previously. Could this be due to the perception that QA of the physics aspects is "too easy" to do (as compared to the problems of quality assurance in the medical decision processes), and that therefore national member societies have already dealt with it sufficiently? It was decided that information on national efforts should be compiled and harmonised, if necessary. A close co-operation with our medical colleagues is of the utmost importance in this issue. Related to QA are also the questions of staffing levels, education and training, and the registration of medical physicists. Following an EORTC consensus statement on minimum requirements for QA, an EFOMP/ESTRO combined working group on staffing levels had been formed. A first meeting of this group was held during the Vienna conference. The EFOMP members of the group met again in Würzburg to prepare for the combined meeting during the ESTRO Physics Meeting in Gardone in early October 1995. The basic points of a planned consensus paper were also discussed in the ETP Committee; the final draft will be distributed to ETP Committee members (and to the ESTRO Physics Committee) for approval.

A new initiative led to the European Conference on Post-Graduate Education in Medical

Radiation Physics in Budapest during November 1994, in close co-operation with EFOMP. This meeting was a good opportunity to make contacts with colleagues from several new states of the former Soviet Union, and the starting point for several working groups on harmonising education, training and accreditation of medical physicists within Europe. This initiative should complement EFOMP activities on registration schemes. Our guidelines had been distributed to all member societies, and were well received by the EU (DG XI). The ETP Committee had appointed Dr Philip Dendy, its former Chairman, to act as registrar - so now it is up to member societies to make use of the scheme! The European Physical Society (EPS) has also set up a registration scheme, with some input from medical physicists: Dr Inger-Lena Lamm, the current ETP Chairman is representing EFOMP at EPS. By the time you read this the next summer school will be over. In October 1995, a repeat of the Nancy summer school on diagnostic radiology was organised in Trieste. Future plans consist of summer schools on radiotherapy physics (June 1996 in Bratislava), interventional radiology (in combination with AAPM on the occasion of the IOMP Congress 1997 in Nice), and nuclear medicine (in 1998).

Scientific Committee is progressing with the preparations of "Medical Physics '96", EFOMP's triennial scientific meeting, organised by our Italian colleagues in Trieste. There are also contributions to several other events, like physics sessions during the ESTRO annual conference (September 1996 in Vienna) and

