14th European Meeting on Complement in Human Diseases

Jena, Germany, 17-21 August 2013

The “European Meeting on Complement in Human Diseases” (EMCHD) is a biannual event that not only is visited by most European researchers working on complement, but also visited by several renowned complement researchers from outside the European continent. The importance of the role of the complement system in human disease was underlined by a double retrospect on the EHEC 2011 outbreak in northern Germany by dr. Burger (Berlin, Germany) during the opening ceremony which focused on the different events which led to the identification of the organism, and by a general lecture by dr. Wenzel (Hamburg, Germany) which looked into the different therapies and the possible role of Eculizimab (therapeutic anti complement C5 monoclonal antibody) in the treatment.

The EMCHD started with a teaching day which provided an excellent overview of the most recent literature given by leading experts. Followed by an interactive session where some recent published papers were discussed in small groups.

By subdividing the EMCHD in different sessions over four days, highlights were given in different subjects, from more fundamental sessions over structure and function to more clinically related fields about the role of complement in disease. In the different sessions both leading experts, as well as PhD-students, presented new, often unpublished, data. And in-between the different presentations were two interactive poster sessions which were very well attended and provided an excellent opportunity to informally discuss the data presented.

I was given the opportunity to present our data about the reduced functionality of plasma-derived MBL upon substitution in MBL-deficient patients. In our presentation we showed that the interaction of inhibitory proteins in the patients’ plasma with the associated proteins of plasma-derived MBL is responsible for this observed effect. The presentation was well received by the audience which was illustrated by receiving an oral award.

During the meeting I came in contact with different research groups which are also working on MBL, either on a more fundamental level (purification, identification and association of MBL and the associated proteins) or on the role of MBL in different diseases (levels and function). The differences in opinion resulted in inspiring discussions. These new contacts have also led, besides the sharing of knowledge, to an exchange in methods and proteins. We are currently testing the functionality of new purified plasma-derived MBL, which was kindly provided by the group of Hansen (University of Southern Denmark, Odense, Denmark).

The informal atmosphere and relative small number of participants, combined with an excellent organization resulted in a successful meeting where everyone was easily approachable.

I am grateful to the Dutch Society for Immunology for the financial support, thereby enabling me to attend this meeting.