

## **The main issues presented at THE HEART VESSELS & STROKE CONGRESS**

With great success was held THE HEART VESSELS & STROKE CONGRESS on 21 - 23 January 2011. In the congress leading Greek and international scientists presented the latest data in the field of cardiovascular diseases. At the start of the Conference presented the major studies published last year and expected to change the course of Cardiology in the near future. It was presented the results of three studies which investigated several new antithrombotic agents for the prophylaxis of patients with atrial fibrillation from thromboembolic events. Specifically, the RELY study confirmed the efficacy and safety of dabigatran, a direct thrombin inhibitor instead of warfarin for the prevention of embolic stroke in patients with atrial fibrillation, while in the ROCKET AF study rivaroxaban (a direct inhibitor of factor Xa) proved equivalent to warfarin . Finally, AVERROES study which ended prematurely, apixaban proved more effective than aspirin in preventing thromboembolic events in patients with AF who can not receive anticoagulation. In the field of coronary heart disease was reported the findings of the study PLATO in which proved the excellent efficacy and safety of a new antiplatelet agent (Ticagrelor) in patients with acute coronary syndrome. The study SHIFT documented the positive effect of ivabradine in patients with heart failure and heart rate > 70 bpm. In the CREST study, was investigated the efficacy of carotid endarterectomy with carotid angioplasty in symptomatic carotid atherosclerosis and proved equal. In heart failure field was presented the results of MADIT CRT and the RAFT studies. The first proved the beneficial effect of biventricular pacing on survival of patients with moderate heart failure while on RAFT study was proved that adding an implantable defibrillator in patients with moderate heart failure who implanted biventricular pacemaker improves survival. Also reported detailed epidemiological data on the incidence and risk stratification of atrial fibrillation and risk factors for its development. The pathophysiological mechanism of the atherosclerotic plaque and thrombus within the vessels that are the root causes of ischemic stroke and the role of anticoagulant in the treatment of ischemic stroke were presented.

In a separate session was reported the latest data in medical management of carotid disease and through fruitful debates, which are indicative of the climate that exists in the world scientific community on this issue, was discussed all aspects of this issue. In a particularly important and innovative meeting established two working groups which through constructive and detailed dialogue of all participants with experts in each field, recorded data available, made clear ambiguities and unanswered questions (eg what is the period over which a rhythm disorder must be considered as atrial fibrillation) and explained what is the situation in the Greek territory in the treatment of stroke and atrial fibrillation.

They also discussed current techniques for diagnosis (implantable loop recorders) and treatment of atrial fibrillation and its complications (ablation, devices for the occlusion of the left atrium tab).

Then presented the major studies on anticoagulation therapy in patients with atrial fibrillation and were analyzed the future prospects in this field as well as analysis of how to calculate the risk of hemorrhagic (HAS BLED score) in patients with atrial fibrillation receiving anticoagulation.

There was also a thorough presentation of the recent published guidelines of the European Society of Cardiology for the diagnosis and treatment of atrial fibrillation as well as the guidelines for the prevention of stroke from the American Heart Association and American Stroke Association and its comparison with the relevant European guidelines.

On the last day of the conference was specifically mentioned the cardioembolic strokes and was analyzed the pathophysiology, the techniques by which the diagnosis was confirmed and determined the extent of the brain damage. Moreover, were analyzed the latest data on the therapeutic approach of these circumstances.

In the last session was discussed the dilemmas in the therapeutic approach in patients with cardioembolic stroke through clinical examples which clarified many issues of concern to everyday clinical practice.