The history of the International Ascites Club

The International Ascites Club was founded in Florence, Italy on November 30, 1990 during an international liver meeting organized by Professor Paolo Gentilini. The reason to found a club of experts in this complication of portal hypertension originated from the peculiarity of the expertise doctors who treat patients with ascites must have. They are experts in hepatology as well as in kidney physiology, hemodynamics, electrolyte disorders, infections, cardiopulmonary function and "transplant medicine". The founders drew up few simple rules. The main purposes of the club were to organize biannual meetings on ascites and related issues, to stimulate the research in ascites, to improve terminology, to define the pathological events related to ascites, and to produce standard rules for high quality clinical trials.

During its 16-year history, the Club organized 9 meetings on different issues. This led to 5 publications reporting the results (2 appeared in Hepatology, two in Journal of Hepatology and 1 in Gut). These papers allowed for better definition of different phenomena (i.e. refractory ascites, hepatorenal syndrome, bacterial peritonitis, hyponatremia).

**Dates, locations, and topics of the nine meetings:**

   
   **Definition of refractory ascites and hepatorenal syndrome.**
8. Berlin, April 2004: *Cirrhotic cardiomyopathy and its potential role in the hemodynamic and sodium handling abnormalities of cirrhosis.*

**Peer-reviewed publications:**

Scientific committees since 1990:

1. G. Laffi (secretary, Italy), L. Blendis (Canada), F. Dudley (Australia), A. Gerbes (Germany), H. Ring-Larsen (Denmark), E. Zambranski (US).
2. P. Gines (secretary, Spain), K. Moore (UK), R. Moreau (France), M. Pinzani (Italy), B.A. Runyon (US), F. Wong (Canada).
3. K. Moore (secretary, UK), G. Garcia-Tsao (US), R. Moreau (France), M. Pinzani (Italy), R. Planas (Spain), F. Wong (Canada).
4. F. Wong (secretary, Canada), G. Garcia-Tsao (US), R. Moreau (France), D. Patch (UK), R. Planas (Spain), F. Salerno (Italy).
5. F. Salerno (secretary, Italy), B. Bernard (France), G. Garcia-Tsao (US), M. Guevara (Spain), S. Lee (Canada), R. Terg (Argentina).

Future perspectives:

The scientific committee of the International Ascites Club is now involved in the preparation of papers that are not obli gatorily the results of consensus meetings, but that may serve to clarify some debated issues in the treatment of ascites (i.e. TIPS and refractory ascites or hepatorenal syndrome).

Another challenge for the committee is to favor the participation of investigators coming from developing countries who wish to become part of the international scientific community. This is an important issue both to revitalize the Club with new blood and to reduce the gap existing between developing and developed countries.