

## Controversies in hepatogastroenterology The president's comments

M. Adler

Service Médico-Chirurgical de Gastroentérologie et d'Hépatopancréatologie, Hôpital Erasme, ULB, 808, route de Lennik, 1070 Bruxelles, Belgique.

The aim of the one and a half day meeting was to try, thanks to a methodology described in 1990 in France (1) and in the USA (2) to come up with recommendations and guidelines concerning four clinical topics in hepatogastroenterology which are characterized by their high prevalence, their great impact on public health and their subject of controversy.

The "Société Royale Belge de Gastro-entérologie" initiated a sham consensus statement based principally on the methodology of the ANAES (Agence Nationale d'Accréditation et d'Evaluation en Santé).

### Methods

#### *Before the public debate*

One year ago, the organizing committee (M. Adler, J. Devière, M. Melange, R. Brenard, J. Delwaide) was set up, outlined the subjects to be debated on a pro/contra style and defined the 4 questions :

- nr 1 : Is endoscope disinfection through automatic machines mandatory ?
- nr 2 : Should we treat patients with cirrhosis due to hepatitis C virus with antiviral therapy ?
- nr 3 : Should we treat empirically with acid antisecretory or prokinetic drugs patients with symptoms suggestive of gastroesophageal reflux ?
- nr 4 : Is antireflux surgery the key treatment for gastroesophageal reflux disease ?

The organizing committee, divided into four reporters, named two experts for each questions and asked them to argue in favor or against the case, to provide the members of the Jury with a manuscript where the scientific basis of their assumptions, their proof level, and the cost-benefit analysis would be included.

The organizing committee designed also a multidisciplinary and multiuniversity panel of members of the Jury, consisting of medical doctors and economists having a practical experience in the field : P. Defrance, P. Pelckmans, J. Fevery, M. Hautekeete, D. Urbain, A. Elewaut, R. Fiase (gastroenterologists/internists) ; J.-P. Sion (hygienist) ; M.C. Closon (health economist) ; D. Bouilliez (general practitioner) ; C. Melot (methodologist, expert in statistics) ; J.-J. Houben (surgeon) ; H. Verdonck (internist - Transparent Commission).

The members of the Jury received in advance the full manuscript of the experts.

#### *During the public debate*

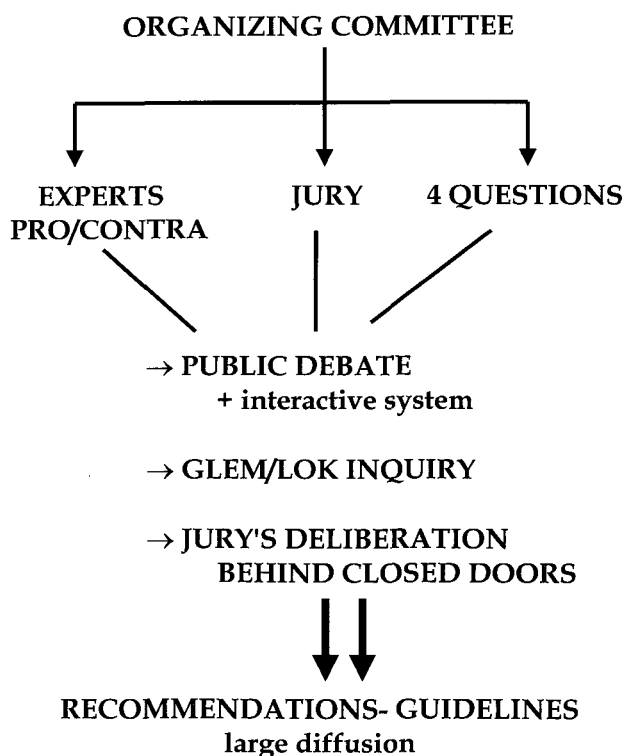
The experts defended their arguments pro and contra during an oral presentation.

Before the discussion, the results of an inquiry among the 24 "GLEM" (Groupe Local d'Evaluation Médicale)/"LOK" (Lokale Kwaliteit Group) was presented by O. Le Moine with the help of M. Willerwulghe and W. Van Ganse, the responsables of the two Belgian lecture committees.

This inquiry served as a measurement of the gastroenterologists' practice. This was followed by a general discussion between the experts, the members of the Jury and the public under the guidance of the organizing committee which served as Chairmen. During the debate, an interactive system for questions and answers was available.

#### *After the public debate*

The Chairmen responsible for each of the 4 questions submitted a draft with a summary of the experts' view and the result of the public debate to the members of the Jury, gathered behind closed doors, first in



subgroups and then together. After the discussion and the agreements, the Chairmen wrote the recommendations of the Jury through a manuscript which is published in this issue of *Acta Gastroenterologica Belgica*, together with the experts's manuscripts and the result of the national inquiry. A short version in French and Flemish will be largely spread through specialized and non specialized journals.

I hope that, thanks to a strict methodology, these recommendations and guidelines will help and interest the general practitioners and the specialists in their daily practice and the political decision-makers and third

party payers in their appropriate choices taking into account the budgetary restrictions.

I sincerely thank all the actors who were responsible for the success of this meeting which attracted more than 250 participants.

### **References**

1. Les conférences de Consensus Base méthodologique pour leur réalisation en France. Agence Nationale d'Accréditation et d'Evaluation en Santé, 1997.
2. Institute of Medicine, Committee to advice the public health service on clinical practice guidelines. Washington : National Academy Press, 1990, FIELD M.J., LOHR K.N., Eds.